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## THE GLIMMER GLASS

BY

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BLIZZARD AND THE TRAVELLERS

TRANQUIL HARBOR had enjoyed a rare green Christmas; and, knowing well that the first shift of wind toward nor'east meant "stepmother's breath"—or, as the unpoetic city world would have put it, terrific cold—the village had made the most of its blessings by turning out from snug living-rooms and snugger kitchens to the Sunday-school tree and various other social functions. The balmy weather lingered, however, to support to its end the slow old year, so that the blizzard came only with the new one. Then the shouting children were kept indoors, because the snow made skating impossible and no other exercise could set even their young blood tingling; the clam-diggers left the Tranquil River; the colony of Norwegian fishermen, unable to reach their weirs, settled down for a holiday with their wives and towheaded offspring.

The River Homestead stood some two miles away from the village proper. It was a stately house, painted white, with good unbroken lines and a stretch of a hundred feet of columned porch, facing the river and the distant sea. It made a charming picture from the water and its own lawn, but at this season there were no eyes to note its beauty, for the Family—the Homestead proprietors being affectionately known thus in the county—had followed their custom of closing the

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hostelry on the shortest day of the year and setting out by steamship for sunny Florida.

The whole front of the place was unoccupied, in fact; and as the wintry dusk closed in on New Year's Day the one sign of life that showed in all the shadowy building was the lamp-light flickering faintly through a window on the ground floor at the back. This illumination was greeted with a grunt by the wizened little man who drove a ramshackly carriage through the snow, and he twisted around to say to the two fares behind him:

"There's somebody into the Homestead, after all. You was lucky the Family did n't leave it shet up tighter'n a hard-shell clam. Most likely, it's Tilda Dunn."

A clear, girlish laugh sounded in answer, then the words, "Well, I hope Tilda Dunn, whoever the lady may be, has a good fire, and a hot supper, and a Christian spirit, and a loving heart——"

"She's changed a whole lot sence I seen her last week if she's lovin'," put in the man, with a malicious chuckle. "You had ought to stayed to the Harbor Inn, like I told you. One of you's got an awful hacking cough."

There was indeed a painful coughing now and then from the passenger who had not spoken; but the young voice cried a blithe response: "It was kind of you to bring us through such a storm, when you have rheumatism, and you were so sure we'd have to turn right back again. Oh, it's so nice to be out of school for ever and ever more! I'd just as soon stay at the Harbor Inn. Places are all the same to me. I think travelling's lovely, no matter where you travel to, but my sister is n't well, and she'd set her heart on getting to this wonderful River Homestead, so nothing else would do."

"She's made port all right, all right," the old man declared. "We got two wonders into the Harbor: one fellow that can grow new things out of any stick he touches, and another that mends broken ones—clocks or humans or gasoline engines is all the same to Rob Van Brink—and makes 'em go as good as first day they wiggled."

"Is he a doctor?" the voice inquired.

"The best you ever seen. His pa was one before him, but the junior's got him beat." Then, not averse to taking tidings of interest back to the pool-room of that same Inn he had recommended, he asked, "What seems to be the matter with your sister?"

"She has had gripe," the girl explained. "It settled in her throat, so she can't talk much. And there's another reason, a special reason, why she chose the River Homestead. Del is going to tell me all about it, are n't you, Del? You know you said so."

The question brought no response, and there followed several minutes of jolting and swinging from side to side, during which they

drew perceptibly nearer to the beacon light. Presently the girl spoke again, but in so low a tone that the old man, hitch his best ear toward her as he might, could not catch the words.

"Del," she whispered shyly, "I have something to tell you, too; something you'd never guess in a hundred years. Oh, but you'll be surprised!"

Still there was no further answer than a squeeze of the hand which the speaker thrust into her companion's muff, so the next remark was addressed to the driver.

"I've never even smelt the ocean, and I'm half foolish with thanksgiving over being grown up and done with boarding-school, and——"

"Please don't talk, Joy," interrupted a gentle voice from the depths of shadow beside her; so quiet fell until, the vehicle coming to a standstill, the man threw back the blankets before descending from his seat.

"You better steer straight for the door, next to where you see that light," he advised, pocketing the bill handed him from the taller lady's muff, and depositing a pair of suit-cases on the snow, with evident intention of carrying them no further. "If you knowed Tilda Dunn's tongue like I do, you'd 'a' stayed into the hotel in town."

The sick woman began to cough, and the girl, feeling oppressed by sudden terror as the driver scrambled across the wheel and clucked to his horse, said uncertainly:

"Perhaps we'd best go back, after all, until to-morrow."

But a hand from the muff grasped her arm, and, yielding to the mute command, she half followed, half supported, her companion toward the lighted window, now but a few yards away. The air was biting cold; the snow sifted stealthily upon them; night had descended thick and impenetrably black. Groping for the door, Joy pounded with all the strength of her numbed fingers. There was some movement within, and a face pressed itself against the pane as if trying to pierce the outside darkness.

"Please let us in!" the girl cried. "We can't eat you! We're harmless, you know, and it's terribly cold out here!"

The face disappeared from the window, there was a shuffle of feet across the floor, and the door opened a cautious crack.

"We're all shet up," the announcement came. "We don't take guests to the Homestead this time of year. Old Tommy Simms knows better. He'd ought to be ashamed to bring you, and I'll tell him when I see him."

Joy laughed ruefully. "What good will that do us?" she asked. "My sister's sick, and we're so tired, travelling all day. We could go somewhere else to-morrow, if you did n't want us here."

The door, however, did not give way under this appeal, and she

turned in desperation to her companion. "We certainly can't stay all night in the storm," she said, her teeth beginning to chatter as much from excitement as from the cold. "The man is n't far off yet, and the only thing is to run after him and go to that Inn he talked so much about."

"Please don't talk, Joy," the other answered, just as she had spoken in the carriage; but she got no further, for she was seized at that moment by a coughing spell, and, pushing her entire weight against the door, it gave unexpectedly inward, and she stumbled down a step into the room. Joy ran back to drag the suit-cases toward shelter. Tilda Dunn, a tall, spare woman, first set her mouth for argument, but after a glance at the new-comer's face her own visage softened and she said:

"What was you thinking of to be out sech a night? That's a killing cough you got! Your cheeks is like chalk, and your lips is blue as bluing. Set down!"

She pushed her unwelcome guest into an easy-chair near the stove, and commenced fumbling at the fastenings of the rich fur coat.

While the patient was being thus cared for, Joy dragged the last of the baggage to the door, bumped it down the step to safety, and stood with delighted eyes wandering about the queer little room, taking in its planked walls and low, open-beam ceiling, its bright carpet, and the crisp lace curtains at the small-paned windows.

"It's like the things you read about," she laughed. "It's like, I imagine, the deep hold of a ship, only more comfortable, more picturesque and quaint. Look at the cat watching the corner cupboard! Look at that cunning Dutch door on the other side, and the gun across the tremendous hooks! Look——"

"Joy! Joy!" The girl wheeled quickly at something in the cry. "This is it! This is the River Homestead! The very room where he brought me to dinner—so many years ago! Thank—thank God! Now, I think—I'm going—to—faint!"

And faint she did, Tilda Dunn catching her, while the girl, Joy, blanching to the lips, threw open the door and sped across the snow after the tail light of the departing carriage.

"Oh, oh!" she panted. "Bring a doctor—that Dr. Rob you told about!"

Old Tommy Simms checked his horse and peered about the curtain of his surrey. "What's the matter of her?" he asked.

"I don't know," Joy answered. "Don't stop to talk! I'll pay you! You can't refuse when my sister is so ill! Bring that doctor from the village!"

The man clucked to his horse. "Humph!" he muttered. "I would n't make this trip to-night again if all the city folks in the land was coughing!"



## CHAPTER II.

## JOY TELLS HER SECRET

TILDA herself put the sick lady to bed. The swoon proved of slight importance, being the result of travelling a long distance in a weak condition; but Mrs. Dunn, having had much experience with sickness, shook her head as she descended the narrow steps into the dining-room.

"We got no place fixed for guests," she explained to Joy, who had been ordered to eat her supper and not worry. "Your sister's been to the Harbor before, she says, so she'd ought to know the Homestead shets up in winter. The furnace ain't even going. I'm caretaking for the Family. I sleep in the steerage, though, and you two can have the other cabin next to mine till she's fit to move."

"Steerage! Cabin!" repeated Joy, puzzled by the words.

Tilda laughed sourly. "Some smart city boarder called 'em by that name," she said. "The Homestead's getting a big hotel, what with the new additions the Family's always building on. Autos in the garage, not to speak of steam launches tooting up and down the river till even a crab can't get his natural sleep. I used to like it better."

"Do you think he'll bring the doctor?" asked Joy.

"No, I don't," responded Tilda. "We got the 'phone yet, though, and I can get the doctor when we need him. Sail-boats instead of launches, and jagger wagons in place of automobiles. But this little house inside the big one ain't changed. Mighty few strangers know that the new parts is built square around this house that Cap'n Joel put up eighty years ago. Here it sticks, just like it used to be, in the heart of their parlors and new-fangled things—two rooms down and two sleeping chambers up. You go by them steps right out of here."

"Oh, I see," said Joy. "You call those rooms the steerage, where we helped Del to bed."

The girl choked down a bit of ham and a cup of tea; but her face was still pale from the fright she had sustained, and her lip trembled as she said:

"Won't you please tell me the truth? Is my sister very ill? Is she going to— Oh, I can't say it! I can't even say the word. I'm so scared here, by myself." She pushed the dishes away, put her head into her hands, and seemed to be lost in weeping; but before the answer came she looked up, dry-eyed, and added fiercely, "Is she very ill? I want the truth! I can stand anything except not being told the truth, when it's my concern and I have a right to know!"

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Dunn, hesitating only the fraction of a second between truth and comfort, and choosing the latter in spite of Joy's appeal. "Don't get worrying. She'll be all right. She's

got a cough, and she's all wore out. You come a long ways, ain't you? What's your names?"

Reassured, the girl lifted her head again. "Our name is Marston," she replied. "Adele—Miss Marston—and Georgiana, but they call me Joy for short. I was away at school. I have been at boarding-school ever since I was a tiny girl, and I suppose I'd be there yet, if I am eighteen, only, our mother died and Del wanted me with her."

"And you are orphans," said Mrs. Dunn, with more than usual sympathy, but Joy hastened to interrupt:

"Oh, I never knew my mother very well. I am a healthy thing that nobody has to bother about, and she was nearly always taking Del to California or Florida or the Riviera. She died abroad, and my poor sister was n't strong, and she got worse on the steamer coming over. Grippe, the doctor said it was. Then nothing would do her except the River Homestead, because she remembered having dinner here when she was a young girl."

"Come from New York?" asked Tilda.

"No, from Philadelphia. That is, through Philadelphia, from——"

"Joy, I want you, dear." The voice sounded from overhead, and after a moment of baffled search the girl discovered a small oblong grating cut through the beams to let heat into the room above. It had doubtless let in the questions and replies as well, for when she had mounted the steep steps and entered the invalid's chamber, the latter reached out a frail hand.

"Will you sit by me, Joy?" she asked, then added in a whisper: "I want you to promise not to talk to the people here about—about ourselves."

The girl fell to her knees beside the bed and fondled the hand she held. "What a mysterious lady you are, Del!" she laughed. "You always make me think you have had things happen to you—wonderful experiences, not at all like this tiresome every-day old world. But poor me! I don't know a blessed thing to tell them about ourselves, so you need n't be afraid! It is always the same in a boarding-school—algebra, history, rice-pudding, and daily exercise. I've never had a chance at real life!"

Miss Marston sighed. After a moment she raised her other hand and, putting a palm on either side of Joy's face, drew it nearer to study the features with wistful intentness. There was no trace of resemblance between the two, save a certain look of pride and fineness lying like a radiance upon them both. Del was of that fair type which seems somehow to suggest the lily; her face was oval in shape, with hazel eyes and pale reddish hair; while Joy had beauty that was almost Oriental in its glow. Her eyes, indeed, were blue, but the brows and lashes darkened them, and their size and slightly slanting

tilt finished the effect. Her lips were delicately full and red; a dimple came and went in one soft cheek; a mass of hair, nearly black, yet threaded with curious streaks of copper, was piled high on her head.

"Are you grown up, Joy?" the sick woman asked whimsically, letting go her hold and sinking back against the pillows.

"Do you want me to be grown up?" the girl counter-questioned. "You are changeable if you do, because it's been drummed into me that school-girls are a kind of worm—not real human beings—green worms that maybe will turn into butterflies some far-off day. Now all of a sudden you'd like me to be grown up."

"It is n't whether I want it or not. It just comes. Poor Joy! My little Joy——"

The girl's dimple twinkled into sight and flashed away again. "You can't take it back, Del," she said demurely. "You meant you'd be glad if I was n't a child any more. Oh, if I had known that when Dr. William Mason Hammond kept asking me a question——"

The hands that held hers tightened so convulsively that the pressure hurt, and Joy laughed.

"Don't worry," she cried. "Don't get scared. I told him I was n't a live creature that had a will; only a simple little school-girl, a green worm, and——"

Del laughed with her, and, if Joy had been noticing, she could not have missed the tenderness of the sick woman's scrutiny. Her thoughts, however, were still upon the confession she had to make, for in poor Joy's experience everything outside the school routine was likely to be misdemeanor.

"Will Hammond's father is rector of the church we went to at school," she continued after a moment, "and his mother is the loveliest old lady I ever saw. She's like a duchess, so grand with her velvet and lace. She gave the most fashionable parties in town, and it was an honor to get an invitation. She took a fancy to me—I don't know why—and she used to make me spend holidays at the rectory, and pour tea and make the mayonnaise. Then I was n't lonely."

Suddenly Del's eyes overflowed with tears. "Lonely, Joy?" she said. "Did you feel yourself—neglected? Did the others go home and leave you there? Did they all have visits from their—mothers?"

"Yes," Joy said absently, then broke into the rhapsody she had been holding back for fear of a rebuke: "Oh, Del, Will loves me! He said so, and, anyhow, I could tell in a thousand little ways. He's a doctor, and he's bright and gay and witty. And he's ambitious. He finished his hospital course last August, and right away he started in practising for himself in Parkton. You have heard of Parkton, where so many sick people go. After he makes lots and lots of money we'll get married. At least, he wants us to."

Perhaps she expected the rebuke to come yet, or it may have been real fondness that made her add as soon as she had taken breath: "Then you will live with us, of course, in the best room in the house. Will can cure you, and I'll love you better than I do him."

There was no immediate answer to this jesting, and Del lay so still that she might almost have been asleep; but after a while she opened her eyes and said, "Do you really love me, Joy? How can you when you've—you've never known me?"

Joy fell to kissing the slim hand on the counterpane, playing with it childishly. "I don't know why I love you," she answered in naïve frankness. "I've often wondered why I should. But I have always been crazy about you, Del. Sometimes I would n't think of Mother for months and months; I'd forget how her face looked, even; and still I would dream about you. When I was little enough to play with dolls the prettiest ones were always named for you. The girls used to laugh at the air-castles I built, about your marrying a great duke or an earl, and sending for me to be bridesmaid. But I had only air-castles, while they went home to real balls and weddings. I just looked forward to you, Del. I think I should have died if you had been the one to—to go, instead of Mother. I've had a lonely life! Oh, I've had a lonely life!" And the poor child trembled for a moment on the verge of tears.

The sick woman seemed to find no words adequate for what was stirring in her heart, and it was the girl who spoke again, this time with a shyness she had not shown about her own affairs. "Del," she asked timidly, "why didn't you ever marry? You're so beautiful, and you must have had dozens and dozens of offers."

"I will tell you some day, dear—that and other things."

Joy bent over and kissed the blue-veined temple. "Things that happened to you years ago?" she ventured. "Maybe before I was even born?"

A flush crept slowly across the pallor of Del's face, and her eyes closed, refusing to meet the clear young gaze. "Before you were even born," she echoed. "Yes, when I was fifteen, and I'm more than twice that now."

"I hear Mrs. Dunn downstairs!" exclaimed Joy, rising to her feet. "I must get her to show me about those cold packs. I'm so thankful, Del, she says it is positively nothing worse than a severe cold you have. If she *does* look cross as fourteen sticks, she's the sort of woman that knows, and I have confidence in what she says."

She started off, but at the door she turned. "I'm so *happy*!" she cried. "It seems like a dream that can't last long: us two all alone together; this funny house to explore when you get through sneezing and barking, and then up and travel off somewhere else again."

"And what about Dr. Will?" asked Del, watching the light in the girl's face, a light which, however, gave way to a grimace not wholly flattering to the absent lover.

"Oh, Will's all right," she answered. "I used to fill lots of lonesome minutes planning the house I'd have. But since I got you, and am going to keep you—I haven't really decided to be grown up. Maybe I can have a better time this way."

"You are n't mad about my knowing Will?" she asked, when there was no comment. "You have n't scolded me a bit."

"I'm glad, Joy," the words came instantly. "I'm more thankful than you can understand. I must have him come to see me."

"Goody!" said Joy. "Oh, goody!" and took a little dance-step into the hall. Still she was not gone. The door had closed, and with a moan Del had lain back again on the pillows, when Joy came in again. There was a frightened look in the blue eyes, as if some new and painful thought had just been born in the consciousness behind them. She hesitated, then walked to the bed and dropped upon her knees.

"Del," she whispered, "Del, the secret you're going to tell me is n't— You know you've said such mysterious things—you said that was the very room *he* brought you to. The secret is n't *bad*! Oh, you could n't ever have been—"

She could not force her lips to form into words the fear which had come to her, but the other read unerringly and smiled.

"No, Joy," she said; "I give you my promise there is nothing for you or me to feel ashamed of."

### CHAPTER III.

#### DR. HAMMOND TAKES JOY TO THE GLIMMER GLASS.

THE patient passed a comfortable night, and seemed in gay humor when the morning came, although she was very weak. She allowed Joy to feed her with a spoon, entering into the girl's light-hearted play as if she found relief therein from her own thoughts.

"I have news for you," she said, after the last of the oatmeal had disappeared, and Joy was selecting the brownest bits of bacon from the plates. "I won't even make you guess. I asked Mrs. Dunn about Parkton, and it is n't far from here."

"Oh, you mean Will," Joy responded. "I can write him, then, and he'll come over."

"Better than that," said Del. "There's a telephone right in this house; so you can call him up."

Joy therefore called the number given in the book for Dr. William M. Hammond, and exuberantly informed that gentleman of her where-

abouts, laughing at his surprise, and dimpling in a way that would have brought his heart to words could he have seen it. She helped Del dress and installed her in the easy-chair beside the stove downstairs, and presently she put on her wraps and went out for a tour of exploration.

The day was brilliant; the sunshine playing on the snow filled the air with rainbow lights; the sky was blue and cloudless. Joy made her way toward the front, tramping several times the length of the columned porch, and staring curiously at the unaccustomed scene. The river was full of ice; scores of seagulls sported upon the dazzling mirror, flying upward with wild shrieks when approached too near by a clammer in his high hip-boots. A white and yellow cat, which had slipped with her from the dining-room, glided across the snow to meet the next delegation of returning diggers, for Danny of the Homestead exacted tribute of all who lived by richness of the Tranquil River.

Joy watched until half a dozen clams had been broken open for his Catship, then transferred her interest to a flock of birds just lighted in one of the naked cottonwoods and chattering noisily. She made a pretty picture, standing with uplifted face, her eyes bright and eager as a child's, her lips parted in a smile that brought the dimple almost out from its hiding place, and the wind already whipping a finer color into her cheeks; so pretty a picture she made, indeed, that the young man swinging around the house and toward the dock stopped involuntarily to look.

It was scarcely thirty seconds that they stood thus, but it was long enough to impress the vision on his mind; then she saw him, and said naively, "They're blackbirds, are n't they?"

"They're stairs," he explained. "Blackbirds have red on 'em, you know. If you watch, you'll see the little scamps rise up like a real stair-steps."

Joy's interest shifted from the cottonwood to the stranger himself. He was tall and straight, and the tan on his face was sufficiently deep to make his fair hair look like tow. He wore a suit of corduroys, loose, indefinitely graceful and pleasing, and in his hand he bore a gun.

"Could you shoot stairs?" she asked.

The man laughed. "I could," he answered; "but what's the use? Any way, suppose I did and you told the game warden? There's a law against it."

"What can you shoot?"

"Ducks, if I'm lucky enough to get 'em near my 'blind.' I was going to row, but the ice is too thick, so I'll have to walk."

Joy looked wistfully toward the marshes, a long crescent of brown in the blue water, too near the ocean to freeze. "Oh!" she said, "I'd give anything to have a gun and try to shoot a duck."



Her new friend had turned toward the road, but at this he came back.

"I fixed this old repeater up, myself," he said, "and she can't be beaten in the Harbor. You take her a minute. There. Sight for the highest of the stairs, then drop a bit and fire. That's it!"

Nothing loath, Joy followed his directions to the letter. The gun went off, and the birds did likewise, rising unhurt and soaring across the river to peace and quiet.

The man laughed delightedly. "No work for the warden yet," he said. "We'll try for something bigger another time. I'd better be hurrying, or Aunt Tilda will come out to ask me a million questions about my mother, and whether she said put in the baking-powder after the ginger or the other way around."

"Would you know what to answer?" Joy inquired, the dimple appearing for an instant.

"Not in less than half an hour. I'd get tangled up."

"I wish you would tell me something that won't take so long. Why do the gulls fly up and drop their clams on the ice?"

"To break the shells, so they can get at the meat. There don't many strangers notice little facts around the shore like you do. Any more problems before I go?"

"Dozens of them, but I'm afraid if you stay you'll get caught and have to explain about the ginger and the baking-powder. I'd feel so guilty if you had stayed on my account."

"Good-by, then," he said, with a last quick look which took in her figure from top to toe and stayed with him, a bright memory, through the day. He got away barely in time, for Joy was still following him with her eyes when Mrs. Dunn came running out, a fascinator wound about her head.

"Where'd Rob Van Brink get to?" she demanded belligerently.

The girl looked her astonishment. "Was that the doctor?" she asked, instead of answering.

"Who else would it be?" cried Tilda. "Who else spends good night-time patching together second-hand guns and better day-time shooting with 'em? Nothing but coots at that!"

"What are coots?" asked Joy.

"Ducks. Fishy tasting ducks, that'd make you sick. I wish I'd caught him."

"If it's for Del," Joy offered in comfort, "I think Dr. Hammond from Parkton will be here this morning, any way."

"You're sailing the boat," said Mrs. Dunn; "but I tell you when Rob Van Brink sees your sister we'll get the honest truth about her;" and she went back to her dining-room still grumbling.

Joy made a vain effort to place the tall striding form of the gunner

once more; then she took the opposite direction, crunching now and again through the crusty snow to the pebbles underneath, relishing the pungent salt tang of the air, exulting in freedom from restraint. There seemed no habitation near the Homestead, and she had gone some distance before she saw, in shelter of the first arch of the foot-and-wagon bridge, a tight little houseboat drawn up on the bank. A curl of smoke rose from its tiny pipe, and she noticed its painted name, "The Merry Clam"; but the door and windows were shut.

She had reluctantly decided to turn back, when the tinkle of bells made her look up. Next moment a smart sleigh had stopped beside her, a young man in furs sprang out, and her hands were seized in both of his.

"Joy!" he cried. "I got your 'phone, and I cut all the patients and came right on. It's bully to see you. Tell me the why. How did you happen to hit on the Homestead of all places this time of year? I'll move you straight to Parkton to a hotel that's open. Who's with you? Here, jump in."

He tossed back the robes in a masterful way, gave her no time for answering his questions, and fairly lifted her into the sleigh. Then, taking the place beside her, he flicked his horse, keeping his dancing eyes on the girl's face.

"Oh, Will——" Joy began, but he did not hear her.

"It's just bully," he repeated. "Worth a bushel of letters. And you let me know right away—good girl! Who's with you? That sister you used to talk about?"

"Yes, Del," said Joy briefly. She was intent on gazing at the white woods. "Why didn't you ever write me how lovely the seashore country is?"

Hammond laughed indulgently. "Write about trees and sticks when a fellow has thousands of better things to say?" he bantered. "Do you mean you did n't like my letters, young lady? Did you come all this way and hunt me up to say you don't like the kind of letters I write?"

"I did n't say so," Joy declared, flashing her dimple at him. "Besides, we did n't come to hunt you up."

After a moment she pointed first to the sky and then the water.

"Oh, I could sing," she said, "when I look at that—and that—and that!"

"Sing?" he echoed. "Nothing to sing about in this God-forsaken hole. Parkton's not much better, for it's full to overflowing with grumpy people who imagine they're sick. I'm tired of sick folks; and, to tell you the truth, Joy, it's bad enough when they're sick and rich and—and—well, *clean*; but when it comes to doctoring some old fisherman in his dirty hovel——"

"Don't," begged Joy, wincing slightly at his tone. "I like them. I haven't seen anybody yet—any of the natives—but I know I like them."

The young fellow let his eyes feast upon her rounded cheek and the streak of copper running through the soft dark hair, and all at once his voice took a caressing note.

"You like everything," he said fondly. "If anybody's half-way nice to you, you think they're splendid. I noticed that long ago."

This brought no reply in words, and after a minute Hammond went on: "Say, I'm a selfish brute! Thoughtless, rather! I haven't asked you— You wrote me that your mother died. I'm sorry. Tell me about it, won't you?"

"There's nothing to tell except what you already know. She was in Paris with Del, and it was sudden. Del came home at once, and I'm not to go back to school. I am to live with her."

"Lord Harry!" commented Hammond, in a lugubrious tone. "That means you'll spend your life gallivanting about the earth, from Turkey to Toledo, and from Oshkosh to the——"

"No," said Joy, laughing at the doleful face he pulled. "Del's sick. That's one reason I wanted you to come. I'm so frightened, Will." And she told him of their arrival the night before, Del's fainting fit and the cough she had, winding up with a laugh that sounded forced.

"Of course, I did n't know you hated sick people," she said. "I counted on your telling me what to do."

"Well, I could n't hate anything that belonged to you," Hammond assured her; "and I will tell you what to do. One of the first things, I'm inclined to believe, is to marry—me, for instance." He would have slipped an arm around her, but Joy drew away and pointed up the river to where the sails of a pair of ice "scooters" could be seen.

"Del needs me now," she said, and silence fell upon them. But soon Hammond regained his spirits.

"The prospects are fine for my getting-out of the whole thing," he said. "There's a man over at Parkton—the Major, everybody calls him; he has more money than you could count in a lifetime even if you counted by tens; and the one thing he has to bother him is his only son. Drinks, the young gentleman does. The Major sends him around the world once in a while, and the scheme now is to have a doctor go with him and try what he can do. I might be the one."

"Could you cure the poor fellow?" Joy inquired.

"I could come as near as any one else," replied Will confidently. "Nobody can cure a case like that, though there are visionary chumps around who think they can. It would mean a barrel of money for

me, Joy, and there's one particular reason why I want a barrel of money."

She did not answer, but the red flowed richer into her cheek, and Hammond, moved beyond his limit of reserve, bent nearer and kissed the spot where he saw the crimson color. "You're the reason," he said, as she turned her face away.

They were passing from the bridge, and the snow had been blown into drifts at the side, leaving the boards so bare that the runners of the sleigh grated harshly against them. Instead of turning toward the Homestead, Hammond kept in the straight road, and presently they had climbed the school-house hill, and, looking back, got a clear view of the ocean, an intense blue in the distance.

"Oh, please stop a minute," Joy begged, "so I can see. Isn't it splendid to be alive? Why did people ever build stuffy houses? I hate them! I'd love to put on boots and wade out into the river digging clams! I'd love to go to the marshes and shoot ducks! I saw a man starting off for that this morning, and I almost envied him. Mrs. Dunn ran after him, and she said the funniest things because he got away; he was fairly flying. Dr. Rob Van Brink it was. Do you know him, Will?"

"I've heard of some of the notions he has," said Will.

"The people are interesting," continued Joy, without paying much attention to her companion's answers. "I mean to get acquainted with them. Those big strong men fishing and shooting—why, I'd even be one of the wives at home, getting the house clean and beautiful and warm before he comes——"

"He'd come staggering, more than likely," interrupted Hammond, and Joy's flight of fancy ended for the moment.

"How did you ever hear of Tranquil Harbor?" the young man asked soon after.

"I don't just know how myself," said Joy. "Del was coughing when I met her in the city; she had had grippe on the steamer, and she thinks this is a good place for colds and troubles with the throat; as good as Parkton. So we just came."

"Humph! And found the place shut up! Well, you will move this very day. You will move to Parkton, where you can have steam heat and other trifles which I suppose you never thought of in this balmy weather."

"Del is the one to decide," said Joy. "But, really, Will, the Homestead is fascinating. Mrs. Dunn talks like a bear and acts as gentle as a kitten. She is care-taker, and she said we could stay all winter if we chose."

"Miss Marston won't choose after I have discussed the matter with her."

"I don't know," said Joy. "It's a queer thing. Del was so determined to reach the Homestead, so energetic, that she would n't stop anywhere on the road. Now the energy is all gone. She seems like an engine when the steam's died out. Maybe she won't be willing to leave."

"She will when I have told her the foolishness of staying."

"But the house is splendid and fascinating. You ought to see the rooms they call the steerage. And I almost know there's an attic somewhere stuffed full of figure-heads from wrecks, jars of ginger from China, and dried fruits from Palermo——"

"You're too delicious, Joy," said Hammond, again slipping an arm behind her. "That head of yours is teeming with ideas a million years behind the times, out of books you've read cooped up in your prison school. There is n't any romance nowadays, except the romance of seeing who can grab the most money. The country districts around Parkton are as crazy as Wall Street itself: the butcher can't be invited to the plumber's ball unless he has a motor-car."

A silence fell upon them, until, passing through the skirt of the school-house woods and turning a sharp bend in the road, they came suddenly upon a frozen pond where a score of young folk were skating. Joy gave an involuntary exclamation of delight.

"I want to skate," she said. "I'd like to join in. I want to have fun with the others. See, they're only girls and young men, like us."

"I'll take you to a better place to skate than that," he promised. "Wait till you move to Parkton."

"What's the name of this?" asked Joy, looking wistfully back as they passed on.

"The natives call it the Glimmer Glass," said Hammond. "You'll be spinning sentimental cobwebs about the name, I suppose."

"It's pretty enough," laughed Joy good-naturedly. "Any way, I've discovered another mysterious and wonderful thing besides the Glimmer Glass. Right down on the river shore, next to the bridge, there's the quaintest place, half house, half boat, with tiny little windows, and a stove-pipe sticking through the roof. It was like a toy Noah's Ark, only big enough to live in. Explain away the picturesqueness of that, Mr. Doubting William, if you can."

"Picturesque!" scoffed Hammond. "A wretched shack! Lorton lives there."

"Somebody really lives there?" inquired Joy, her interest heightened instead of killed. "What do you suppose he does all day?"

"I've heard he reads Bernard Shaw one day and lies in a trance the next. Lorton's famous, or infamous, throughout the county. A wreck of a gentleman, I understand; a real wreck, not the kind collectors buy."

"His boat is called The Merry Clam," said Joy. "One of the first things I do is going to be to pay a visit there and find out all about it."

"The first thing I do," retorted Will, "is to see your sister and get you moved to Parkton. And I'm going to do it now!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### JOY IS TOLD MUCH MORE THAN SHE UNDERSTANDS.

AFTER an examination of the patient, Dr. Hammond announced it as his opinion that she should be removed at once to the drier air of Parkton. He was very urgent, and, to do him justice, more sincere and disinterested than his previous talk with Joy might have led one to expect. But Miss Marston refused pointblank to go; and the old country practitioner who came over finally from the Harbor, arriving on Will's indignant heels, confirmed her judgment.

"Not that it makes a bit of difference," Dr. Van Brink, Sr., said later to Tilda Dunn. "She's a sick woman. But, far as I can make out, she's where she wants to be, and that's the chief thing after they reach her stage."

"She's a lady that's been used to the very best," remarked Tilda, then added in scandalized accents: "I heard they got sick people sleeping in the cold outdoors over to Parkton."

"My Junior says that part's all right," the doctor grunted. "If the Family would n't mind you taking guests——"

"They don't mind. We had it understood, in case anybody come, and I felt I'd like to."

"Then I'd fix up a room opening onto the balcony and put a bed outside. Let her sleep there, under plenty of covers, of course."

He drew on his overcoat with another grunt, for he was growing portly and did not relish long winter trips. Tilda watched him disapprovingly.

"I thought Rob was to take your outdoor visits now," she said.

"He is." The doctor grinned. "When he's not off gunning. And if they can get him, they don't want me. That lad has a way of hypnotizing 'em so they don't know they're in pain."

"He went by here like a streak of greased lightning," grumbled Mrs. Dunn. "I wanted him to give that poor girl upstairs one of them hypnotizing glances, but by the time I got to the shore he had his boat in the channel and was hiking for the marshes."

"There's only about two years in life when a man thinks it's happiness to sit hunched up in the marshes, freezing to the boat and praying the Lord to send him ducks, and if he's cut off from his wish



it seems to stick in his crop until he's ninety. I don't mean Rob to have anything like that to curse me for."

"Well," said Mrs. Dunn, "you better sit hunched up over your fire and pray the Lord to send you sense. You'd spoil the angel Gabriel hisself, blowing his horn so's he could loaf. Make Rob earn his bread."

Dr. Van Brink was stung to defend his son and his own methods. "Don't you lose your sleep a-worrying about us," he counselled. "Rob's got ideas, and there's nothing better to start out with. He's stopped young Dixon from drinking—I don't know how; and he brought the mammy 'round to let the lad take work in town. Why, that rich Major over to Parkton had heard about Rob! He sent for him last week and offered the boy his own price to take his son abroad."

"I guess Rob jumped at the chance."

"Then, you don't know Rob, because he jumped square the other way."

"He must 'a' had a reason," Tilda suggested.

"His reason was, the patient was n't worth it. He says the cure he's got won't work unless there's a whole lot of real *man* to apply it on. Rob told me he was sorry for the Major, but what the pet-lamb really needed was a mixture of valet and kindergarten nurse, and he did n't feel like such a combination."

"All that money!" ejaculated Tilda. "You had ought to 'a' licked him twenty years ago." The old man turned at the door for a last fling.

"Still got hot shot into your tongue," he chuckled; "and proud of being cranky, as usual. But you must 'a' taken a liking to these strangers or you'd 'a' sent 'em to the Harbor Inn."

"I took a liking to their money, same as anybody else that ain't crazy would," retorted Tilda, with stolid humor, and Van Brink went off laughing, because he knew so well that, talk as she might, her favor was not purchasable with gold.

Certainly it could not have been love of money which made her so kind to her guests. As soon as it was decided they were to stay, she prepared rooms at the front of the house, heating one of them with a stove, and made the balcony ready for use as the doctor had directed.

The weather continued cold, but the sun shone four hours daily on the veranda, and there Del sat, bundled in steamer-rugs, quiet, uncomplaining, the only change in her expression being a light that invariably kindled her hazel eyes at sight of Joy. She was often alone, for the spell of the place entranced the girl, and the older woman sat many an hour watching the marsh meadows, listening to the beat of the restless sea, and leaning forward occasionally to scan the figure of some man in oil-skins or hip-boots on the river shore.

Her mind hovered always about one idea, and sometimes her lips would move as she whispered to herself the perpetual question:

"Shall I tell her? Now, since she's to marry, it may not be necessary. Shall I leave the truth to Will Hammond for her? Which way will make her happy?"

Both the young doctors paid visits to the patient on that upper porch, because Del requested it; and Joy alone of the little circle gathered there was unaware that the slender link with life was surely loosening.

One sunny morning Del was seated in her usual place when the girl appeared below, held up a dingy brown object for her to see, then came around by way of the steerage to join her.

"Look!" she cried. "It's a basket, woven together out of reeds, but they call them pots, and they use them to catch eels. I'm so happy when I find something like it was a hundred years ago."

Del's eyes followed the girl with unutterable yearning. "Did you ride with Will?" she asked.

"Oh, just across the bridge. He put me out and said that was far enough for me to come back alone. Did you know he had really bought the car? He says a doctor can't cure even a Pekinese these days unless he drives up in a motor. He's silly. And he's still begging me to beg you to move to Parkton."

"Do you want to change, Joy?"

"Indeed I don't. It's as stiff there and as formal as it was in school. I want a suit of slickers, and I want hip-boots, and I want some eel-pots and a boat! Oh, yes, and a gun! Do you think we've got a streak of wild blood in us to make me feel like that?"

"But I don't feel like that," the other answered, smiling.

Joy hung her new basket in a corner of the porch and filled it with glistening holly; then she crossed over and kissed Del's forehead. "You will feel it when you're well," she said. "And we will give Mr. Stuck-Up Dr. Hammond the slip and be savages together."

"Don't you care for Will?" Del asked.

"I do," protested Joy, at the same time making a slight grimace. "He's so good, and I think it's splendid the way he pushes on. But, somehow, he's changed. He cares what people think! He scolded me for even looking toward The Merry Clam. What would he say if he knew I went inside on my way back?"

"The Merry Clam? Is that the little houseboat?"

"Yes," said Joy. "I've watched that place like a hawk ever since we came, and this is the first time it's been open. But Rob Van Brink goes in and out."

"I like Dr. Junior," Del remarked.

"So do I," Joy agreed. "Well, about The Merry Clam. Will says

the man drinks or something. But to-day he was mending a seine and the door was open, so I stood and looked on. Then he said, 'Come in,' and I was n't afraid, because he spoke like a gentleman. You would love his little place, Del. He has everything crowded into it, from a cooking-stove to a library! Really, you would n't believe it, but he has books."

"What kind of books? I suppose Curiosity-Box looked at all the titles. The Sailors' Almanac and the——"

"No, not at all," Joy interrupted. "You talk like Will. They are *good* books. Some of the classics, and new ones, too. He has the Bible, and '*Les Miserables*,' and he wants to take me bobbing for eels some night when spring comes. And he has a copy of '*Lucile*'——"

"'*Lucile*'!" cried Del. "'*Lucile*'!"

"Yes, that old-fashioned poetry! Who would have looked for it in The Merry Clam? Maybe he had to learn quotations from it once, as I did: 'But civilized man cannot live without cooks!' and so forth. Aren't you feeling well? You look so white."

"I'm cold," the invalid said, with a slight shiver. "Let's go to the fire inside."

The girl looked away to the ocean, drawing in long breaths of the wintry air, before obeying the request. Then she helped Del into an easy chair, arranged the down pillows at her back, and settled herself nearby.

"He's a big, fine-looking man," she returned presently to memory of her visit; "and his eyes smile all the while you're talking, just as if he knew a thousand times more than you did, only he'd let you have your way. He's suffered, I almost know. I don't believe he drinks. His name is George——"

Suddenly Del leaned forward and laid a trembling hand on hers. "Don't tell me," she said. "Don't let's talk right now."

"Why, you're still cold!" exclaimed Joy, jumping to her feet. "I forgot you had n't had your glass of port. Why don't you ever complain and shake me up? I'll go and get you something good and hot."

Del accepted without comment all the attentions which Joy offered; but when the latter was slipping from the room, thinking her asleep, she stirred and said, "Don't leave me. I want to tell you—I think you ought to know why we came to the River Homestead."

"Did you ever hear," she went on, "that there was a secret in our family? Something sad——"

"No," said Joy quickly, her eyes widening. "Not—not disgrace? You said the other night——"

The frail hand reached out and caressed Joy's cheek. "Nothing to be ashamed of, dear," Del said. "Nothing to be ashamed of."

"It was why you never married," said Joy.

"Listen," Del commenced again, bracing herself for the task. "In the old days, when I was a young girl, Father had a school for boys, a school that was famous because it was so high in standard. My mother——"

"Our mother," interrupted Joy, with a generous desire to make things easier by claiming a share of everything connected therewith. But the speaker did not notice.

"My mother was an unusual woman, who was all ambition and brain. She was more a scholar than Father himself. Unfortunately, there was no son, and she became ambitious for me in an odd, almost unfeminine way. From the cradle, she trained me to the idea of going to college and later taking up study of the law."

"Law!" cried Joy, laughing in spite of the gravity of the matter. "You! Why, you're like a princess! You're the kind of woman men would die for, would ride to battle for. You a lawyer!"

"I hated the thought. Her plans seemed to me a slur on my appearance—as if she meant I *could n't* marry, that I was n't pretty or attractive. I used to cry myself to sleep with longing to be beautiful, to be happy in the careless way that other girls were happy. Then there came a pupil of Father's, who seemed different from the rest. One day, while he explained a Latin translation, he kissed me. Oh, oh——"

Joy had no words to answer what was in the other's tone, so she was silent.

"I think the surprise of it made me crazy just for the moment. But he was good, Joy, sweet, and gentle, and patient. We saw each other often, and I loved him. I would have followed him to the ends of the earth, and he knew it and still was good. But when at last I wanted to tell the truth and ask that we might be engaged, he had not the courage."

Again there was a pause, and again Joy did not speak.

"His idea was that if we were actually married before we told, no one would dare to separate us, and I yielded. Mother was on a long visit away from home, and Father never dreamed of what I had in my mind and my heart. Gil—that was my own name for him, which the others never heard, for I had made it up myself—was twenty-one, and we told lies about my age, so it was easy to be married. He brought me to this very house, and we had dinner. Afterwards we walked to the Glimmer Glass and sat there looking at the reflections while we made our plans; such childish plans, Joy, such wonderful golden plans of what we would do when he got command of the ship and we sailed forever around and around the world! But Gil thought we'd better wait about confessing, and I did what he told me to."

"Did they find out?" asked Joy, in an awed whisper.

"Mother discovered it, of course. It broke her heart, I think, without breaking her will and spirit."

"But you were—you were married! Everything was all right."

"She could n't have been more bitter if I had committed a sin," said Del sadly. "Gil had been suddenly called home on account of illness in his family. The marriage was quietly annulled without ever being made public. I don't know how, except that Mother got her way, though Father would have let me have mine. He was gentle, like Gil, and he gave in to argument. The school was turned over to other hands, and we went to Canada to live. You—you were born there, dear, the next year."

"I don't care about me," said Joy. "I think she was cruel. Tell me what happened. What became of—Gil? What was his real name? Did he turn out to be somebody very, very rich and nice and fine? Why did n't he come back and carry you away?"

"I'm telling you about real men and women," Del said. "He never came back. They made me—my mother made me—write and tell him not to, that it would be no use. I was nothing but a child, and it was easy to force me, and all the time I believed in my heart that he would understand. I thought he would come! I held to this hope as the days went by. There was only one thing where I was allowed to have my way."

"But was n't he somebody great and distinguished?" persisted Joy.

"No," Del answered; "he was n't of great family. But, Joy, I loved him! I was grown enough to love him! If he had come back, I should have found courage to dare them all!"

"Poor Del!" murmured Joy.

The hazel eyes lighted and shone with tenderness. "Then you were born," she said. "They let me name you. I chose Georgiana, and shortened it to Joy. I think all the love inside me turned to you. The last time I ever shed a tear was the day Mother took you off to school. Such a little, little girl!"

"I remember that!" Joy exclaimed. "You cried. I got away from the carriage and ran back to kiss you once more. I was glad to leave everybody except my pretty sister."

"Sister!" repeated Del. "Sister! Oh, Joy, don't you see?"

But Joy saw no more than the literal words had told, and they sat for a little, each busy with her own memories. At length the girl asked:

"What has it got to do with coming to Tranquil Harbor?"

Del studied her before replying, but presently she said, "His people were seafaring men, and if he's living, he's in this neighborhood."

Joy's face changed curiously, and to the watching woman it seemed

to take on something of that arrogance before which she had cowered so long in her own mother's countenance; but next moment the trace of hardness faded, and the girl's lips quivered as she knelt down and threw both arms about the invalid.

"I don't believe it!" she cried. "I don't believe you're married to—that you ever had anything to do with fishermen— Oh, Del, tell me it's not true!"

Del stroked back the dark hair with both her hands. "Not fishermen," she ventured, when she could control her voice. "I thought you liked them."

"I like them," said Joy. "Yes, I like to look at them the same way I do books or pictures. But being *kin* to them is different."

"Don't!" The other winced under the words. "Don't!"

Joy raised her head and searched the face above her. Her blue eyes had steadied with a sudden purpose. "We've got to see it through," she said. "I always want to know the truth, so there's nothing else to crop up later on. Tell me his name, and I'll find him—I'll find him for you, if that's what we came here to do."

"But you're—you feel ashamed—now that you know."

The girl was too honest to equivocate. "Nothing you had done could keep me from loving you just the same, Del," she answered. "I'm—it's the surprise, I suppose. I'd give anything I have if it had all never happened; but you're my sister, and if you tell me his name I'll find him for you."

"For me!" faltered Del. "Oh, I can't! I'm so tired! I can't go through with any more!"

"Do you want to find him?" Joy questioned. "Do you really want to see him again, after all these years?"

"I thought so. I thought it was my duty. I could n't think of any other way. But now I've lost courage again. I suppose I could n't be a coward for so many years under the rule of another mind and not grow into one for good. I'm so ill and frightened! No, I don't want to find him, Joy. I can't even bear to hear if he's alive."

"Then we'll let Will move us to Parkton to-morrow," said the girl, with resolution; and for a moment the older woman's fancy was diverted.

"Will!" she said. "I'm so thankful when I think of Will. I pray that he's good and brave and strong. I pray that you love each other, Joy."

But the alien was soon crowded out again. "To think of the wasted years when I might have had you with me!" she said bitterly. "If I'd had courage! No, I don't want to find him, Joy. It's you I'm thinking of. The empty years while I've dreamed of holding you in my arms, and I find you so young, so young. It frightens me."



"We're together," Joy sought to soothe her; then, with a vague wonder whether it was fear of Will's separating them which caused her sister's grief, she added, "I'll never leave you, Del. You come first always. Will said he might get back this afternoon, so I can ask him to find us a nice place in Parkton. Or suppose I go and 'phone him, to make sure?"

Del, however, clung to her, burying her face against the soft young bosom. "Love me, Joy, love me," she whispered.

## CHAPTER V.

### MISS MARSTON CLAIMS A PROMISE.

JOY was profoundly moved by the story she had heard; but the ties of kinship must have cultivation to flower into vital affection, and it is certain that she had been more touched in her pride than in her heart. Brought up in an artificial manner, seeing Mrs. Marston and Del but rarely, she had shrunk from the former's coldness, and, while devoted to the latter after a sentimental fashion, she was far from actually knowing her. In fact, she might have accepted an early marriage to a foreign nobleman, or a millionaire, or a distinguished artist, as the fulfilment of her dreamings; but the uncolored truth of the mystery revolted her.

She was walking up and down the lawn in the early afternoon when Hammond appeared around the corner of the house.

"You're the very one I wanted to see," she said. "What brought you back? Mind transfer?"

"Perhaps," said Will. "Since I can't get you to Parkton, I thought I'd take you to the Glimmer Glass." Then she saw the skates swinging from his shoulder.

"That's nice," she said. "It will give me the chance to ask you something."

Joy ran upstairs and rummaged in her trunk for her skates. When she had found them, she stepped out to the balcony, and, struck all at once by a strange look on Del's face, she bent over her and said:

"I don't think I ought to go. You're not so well to-day."

The invalid accepted her caress passively, but after an instant's pause she said, "Will might be—might not like it if you disappoint him. I'll try to wait till you come back."

"What a precious, foolish sister!" cried Joy lightly. "Anybody would think you meant to fly away. Not going to move without me, are you?"

"Skating," said Del, not noticing the remark. "The Glimmer Glass! Oh, I wish I could go with you to the Glimmer Glass!"

"Maybe we could take you," Joy suggested, "if we wrapped you

up carefully, and in the car——” But Del shook her head with a slight shiver.

“No,” she said. “No, I don’t want to go. Go on now, and come back early. I must talk over something with you.”

“She does n’t take it in,” sighed Miss Marston wearily to herself, when the girl had gone. “She’s a child, a sleeping child, and I don’t know whether to waken her or not. If I felt sure this young Hammond is kind and that he has her heart—but sometimes I doubt—I doubt——”

Tilda came with a hot bottle for her feet, and Del tried to keep her, shrinking from solitude; but there were house duties to be done, and soon she was alone again to take up the hammering question.

“Could I trust the truth to Tilda? Could that hard woman be gentle enough—— Oh, I must have help! I must tell some one! Dr. Van Brink—or Rob—Rob!”

With the last thought came a sort of hazy peace, and she drifted off to slumber.

“Will,” Joy said presently, as they hurried along the lane leading to the Glimmer Glass. “I’m worried about Del.”

The young doctor grew sober. “I would n’t frighten you for the world,” he rejoined, “and I don’t think I’d speak at all if you had n’t mentioned it first; but the truth is—Miss Marston is n’t——”

He hesitated so that she threw him a swift glance, then looked away. “Don’t keep it back,” she commanded. “Say it right out.”

“It’s only that you ought not to be entirely unprepared. We must always hope for the best, of course—that’s part of the game, and somehow one always does hope until the end. But I won’t deceive you. Your sister is in a bad condition.”

“Worse?” said Joy. “Is she worse than when we came?”

“Her kind of trouble does n’t get better; and I did n’t like the damp seashore from the first. I——”

“You never told me there was—danger.”

“I hope there is n’t,” he answered. “Only, you are such a stickler for knowing the truth, and——”

“How would the danger come?” Joy broke in, controlling her voice so admirably that it gave him a comfortable impression of indifference on her part. He detested scenes. “What would happen, and what could I do?”

“There would be hemorrhage—blood, you know—from the lungs. It would probably be the end. You would call Mrs. Dunn and ’phone to me. But you need n’t look so frightened. I’m sorry I told you!”

Joy had whitened at his explanation, spoken with a lightness he did not realize, and she turned with the intention of going back. Will grasped her arm, laughing partly in deprecation, partly in annoyance.

"Don't be foolish," he protested. "Nothing is going to happen. Tilda Dunn is there, and you don't think I would have brought you away unless it was all right, do you?"

"Poor Dell!" said Joy, apparently not listening to a word he said. "She seems so worried, and I can't find out just what it is." Then a light broke in her face. "I know!" she cried. "There's Rob Van Brink on his way to the river. I'll get him to stop and take a look at her."

Van Brink's tall figure came around a corner of the lane that moment. Despite the cold, he wore no hat, and the wind lifted his blond hair to show the streak of white above his tan. He walked in the middle of the road, beside an open cart piled to the top with decoy ducks and various other shooting paraphernalia. He was singing to himself in a clear tenor, but at the girl's salutation he stopped his music and his steed and approached the waiting couple. Joy's dimple showed as she gave him her hand.

"I think you two doctors know each other," she said; then to the newcomer: "It's a shame to ask you to spare a moment from your gunning, but would you mind giving my sister a tiny visit?"

"Nothing wrong, is there?" inquired Van Brink, adding at once: "But, of course, I need n't ask; there could n't be, since you are making for the Glimmer Glass."

"How do you know?" Joy smiled at him.

"Your skates and my logical brain. Don't feel worried, Miss Marston. I'll run up to the balcony and cheer the wounded with news that I saw you at the front—if you think the sight of me won't ruin her nerves."

He pointed laughingly to his corduroys and heavy boots. Before Joy could reply, the horse started off on his own responsibility, and Van Brink, with a farewell wave of his hand, went in pursuit. Hammond was scowling as he turned back to Joy and said:

"You seem on rather good terms with our country doctor, for a short acquaintance. I thought his father did the work, while sonny sat in the marshes, firing at birds and devising cures for men that drink or smoke."

"Oh, he does everything," answered Joy. "He shoots, and he even goes out after clams and crabs, just for the sport. He acts as if he had all the leisure in the world, but Tilda says there is n't a sick man or woman or child for miles about that does n't beg for Dr. Junior, and how he finds time to see them all is what she can't figure out. He has a passion for making old things over into new. She says——"

"Excuse me for interrupting," interposed Hammond, "but if we don't move faster, we won't get to the ice before the spring thaws set in."

Joy accommodated her step to the faster one he set, pulling the soft white cap further over her hair and ears, but she had heard his words externally, without taking in their real significance. She therefore went on with what was in her mind.

"Tilda says too he has a cure for men that drink, and he has succeeded with a few cases already. And it is n't as if he were just a slow country doctor; he has had the best advantages, and his record at the hospitals in town was wonderful. Don't you think he's handsome, Will, with that strong, bronzed face and the fair hair?"

"I never looked at him, Joy," responded Hammond irritably. "I thought you and I were going out for a little fun together."

She caught the note of impatience this time, and after a moment she said, as if to make amends for wandering from their own affairs, "I think Del will be willing to move to Parkton now."

Hammond brightened at once. "That's bully," he declared. "I knew you could bring her to it when you really wanted to. We won't let her back down, so we'd better move to-morrow. And I have some news to tell you, too, since you're listening to me once more. The greatest thing is going to happen—maybe. Old Major Moneybags has as good as said I'll be the one to go abroad with his son. I don't know when. If he takes a notion for the Mediterranean first, it might be any day; but if he begins with Norway, we'll wait for warmer weather."

They came out beside the pond, and Joy was struck afresh with the beauty of the spot. "I love that," she said. "I really hate to leave it. I never saw anything like this seashore country."

"It is rather nice," Will acquiesced; then as he found a place for Joy to sit while he strapped her skates, he continued, his thoughts engrossed with weightier matters than mud and ponds: "The Major's favor means a fortune for us. I think sometimes I can't keep on watching and watching for that old ship of ours to come in. I think, what's the use, after all? I have a decent practice already. Why not be—be married, and let the ship come later?"

"Is n't the Glimmer Glass a lovely name?" asked Joy, instead of answering to his enthusiasm. "Please let's forget serious things and enjoy ourselves while we have a chance."

In the meantime, curbing his impatience to be on his way to the marshes, Van Brink put his horse into one of the Homestead stables, and entered the dining-room. Mrs. Dunn met him with thankful mien.

"You're in the nick of time, Rob," she said. "I got to go to the Harbor, and Miss Marston's all alone. Her sister would be a sight better to her if it was n't for that Parkton swell hanging to her coat-tails. What she sees into that monkey beats me."

"What did you ever see in Uncle Johnny Dunn?" asked Van Brink, presuming on being a favorite with the sharp-tongued lady; then he went on: "I can't stay but a minute, though. By cats, I've lost an awful time from gunning! Dad's been in New York, and every human in the county sniffing from gripe! Last night Dodson Jenks took a notion his baby was dying of croup, and I had to sit and watch four hours, though I told him you couldn't kill the young rascal with a hammer. So to-day is mine."

"Humph!" said Tilda, proceeding with her preparations to depart. "Yours or the good Lord's, Rob, you better give it to that poor woman upstairs. If I don't mistake, she's sick, and she's worrying over something, and the girl's too terrible childish to notice. There's going to be a waking-up for her some day, and it'll hurt."

She was still settling her hat when Rob mounted to the balcony, feeling resentfully glum that he should be caught in such a trap while the two persons most concerned were off skylarking.

"She just looked sweet, and I tumbled in," he thought. "She said it was a shame to spoil my fun, but she did n't try to spoil Hammond's instead, I notice. They're laughing at me. Spooning, too, or I miss my guess," he wound up, remembering the dimple and the girl's vivid beauty.

But once in the patient's presence, desire for sport quite vanished, and he became the professional man, from the steady blue eyes to the tips of his sensitive fingers. A change had come over Del Marston even in the hour just past, a change which, subtle though it was, Van Brink quickly interpreted as heralding the last change of all. She held out both hands at sight of him, like a tired child to whom aid has come.

"It's the end," she said. "I know. Perhaps one always knows when it's really here. Will you make me a promise?"

"Of course I will," he answered, meeting her gaze with one that was manly and straightforward. "As soon as I call Tilda, and we get you moved into the other room. It's better there, more comfortable, and you will tell me all about it."

"Now," she urged. "Now. It's for Joy—Joy. Tell Joy—I trust you—tell Joy she's my——"

The voice ceased abruptly, and Van Brink moved forward and caught her in his arms. When he had laid her on the bed inside, and had done what he could, he strode through the house, seeking Tilda.

"Somebody's got to go for the girl," he said, finding Mrs. Dunn in the very act of departing. "There's no time to spare. She's at the Glimmer Glass with Hammond."

"Will it be me or you?" asked Tilda, responding to the voice of authority and briskly practical. "I started the furnace to-day, so's there's plenty of hot water into the bath-room next her. Is she passing away?"

"Hemorrhage," said Van Brink. "She won't last an hour. She can't talk now, but there's a chance at the very last if her will-power's strong enough to force her throat. The girl must be here by then."

"You could run young Parkton-Smarty's automobile and get there quicker 'n walking."

Rob thought for an instant. "I can't leave her," he decided; "and the truth is, I'd like you here, too. Why could n't you get George Lorton? He's home, and he'd help in a case like this."

"He's home," agreed Tilda, with fine scorn. "Much good it does him to be home. He's laying dead drunk into his dirty little boat. I was there just now to get him to open clams for fritters, but I have to steam 'em instead."

"Then, you go," ordered Rob. "Only, try not to frighten Joy—Miss Marston." And he took the stairs again, two steps at a time.

Brisk as Mrs. Dunn was, however, the walk was a fatiguing one, climbing as it did the long hill to the schoolhouse; and some additional minutes were lost in picking out among the skaters the pair she sought. On the return she was left far behind, while Hammond, with a hand under Joy's arm, helped the girl forward as fast as she could go. He was awed somewhat by the anguish on Joy's face, and yet his heart leaped within him, and a thought fluttered into comfortable being in his mind:

"There is nobody else to interfere. She's mine! Joy's mine!"

Without stopping to remove her white hat and sweater, Joy made her way to the room where Del lay upon the bed. All the blood appeared to have left the delicate body, and the oval face looked like a piece of finely modelled marble. At sight of the new-comer, Van Brink moved away, leaving place for the girl to throw herself down, bury her eyes in the counterpane, and grope until she found Del's hand.

"Oh, I should n't have left you," Joy moaned. "Oh, I've been so selfish and blind and wicked! Del, Del——"

The white lids lifted, and the eyes rested on the copper thread running through Joy's hair. After a moment her voice sounded, distinct and clear: "I'm your mother, Joy. Gil—your father——"

At first the words failed to pierce Joy's understanding. She knelt on, fondling the hand which was already growing cold, hoping in her young ignorance that she was yet to have a chance to show Del an adequate love and tenderness. That she was concerned in deeper



wise than as a sister did not enter her intelligence until several minutes had ticked themselves away upon the clock. Then, with a smothered cry, she comprehended. Raising her head, she stared down into the face before her.

"Who is Gil?" she asked.

There was no answer except a flutter of the lashes.

"Who is Gil?" repeated Joy.

With distressing effort, Del spoke once more, but not in explanation.

"Doctor," she said, "Doctor, you promised. Take care of her for me."

Beside the foot-rail the two young physicians stood together; at the words they both started forward. The dying eyes looked on Hammond, then, moving to Van Brink, rested there until their light was gone.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HAMMOND PRESSES FOR HIS ANSWER.

As soon as the funeral was over, Hammond urged Joy to let him take her to his mother, but the girl, hitherto so docile under counsel, proved obdurate. Her dependence dropped from her as even the best-drilled habits are wont to do when some upheaval shakes the real character underneath; and she took charge of her affairs in a way that astonished all who saw the change. She made a trip to the city to see the Marston family lawyer; then she returned to the River Homestead, where she pored over the three thick hotel registers, and plied Mrs. Dunn with questions about Tranquil Harbor people past and present. But the most adroit examination failed to discover any one of the name of Gilligan, Pettingill, or Gilbert. And winter gave way gradually to spring.

"It's absurd," said Hammond one day as they sped along toward Parkton in the trim car. "Morbid, Joy! That's what it amounts to! You're actually taking root there! Your—that is, Miss Marston never tried to find him. She evidently did n't want to. It's foolish sentiment."

"I want to find out the truth, Will," she told him, as she had already told him many times before.

"That's no reason," grumbled Hammond. "You've turned into one of those women who could sacrifice everything and everybody to a notion that gets lodged in their brain. I want you to marry me, and I don't think it's fair!"

His reproach had sent the color to her face, and she was about to answer with some spirit; but the last appeal touched her affection for him, and perhaps her sense of justice, for she checked the retort and said instead:

"Poor Will! I suppose it does seem hard, from your point of view. You've been so good, attending to carrying Del—carrying her home and all. Was n't it curious she had told you just what she wanted done, when she never said a word to me?"

"We talked over a good many things together," he rejoined. "She knew long ago that she could n't—would n't be well again."

"And I was no comfort to her! I was so busy with myself and my own affairs! Oh, Will, I don't want to be selfish. I want so much to be good and brave and strong. Ought I to stop trying to find out? Ought I to put it from my mind now, what Del—what she said—as long as I can't do her any good?"

The young fellow's eyes sparkled with hope. "That's the idea, Joy," he cried approvingly. "There are things that come sometimes that we can't help by dwelling on them and getting doleful. This is one. Miss Marston herself—she's passed away, so it makes no difference to her now. Besides, she would be the first to want you to brace up and be happy."

A flush crept into the girl's face as she glanced at his eager eyes. "She did want me to be happy," she acquiesced. "She said—that first night at the Homestead, when I told her about you, she said——"

"What did she say?" asked Hammond.

Joy would not repeat it, so he answered exultantly his own question: "She was glad that I loved you, and that we would soon be married! I know! I've known that for ages! Why, Miss Marston went over it with me one day soon after you came, and did n't she put me through the paces! I was afraid I might not pass examination, but there's one thing, Joy, she could n't help seeing: I love you! She had tears in her eyes, and she said she had been so tired and wretched on your account—not having any relatives, you see—but that I had given her relief."

Joy mused for a while in silence. "To think she was my mother!" she said softly. "I must have seemed so hard, so taken up with my foolish little interests. I lie awake nights now going over what she said, trying to put it together, but it's like a picture puzzle with the biggest pieces missing. I would n't let her tell me! She wanted to, and I would n't listen! That's what hurts!"

Hammond had heard this lament often enough in the weeks just past, and he was bored and disappointed. He stared before him sulkily for a moment; but in the end his better nature prevailed, and he turned to her with a smile.

"The Major has put me on a salary," he said; "a good one, too. I'm on regular duty there, whether he takes a sudden shoot-off to Norway or stays at home. Why can't we get married now?"

Joy did not repulse him. She had suffered acutely these past months, and her whole being cried out for tenderness and love. There was something very soft shining in the eyes she lifted to his and let fall again.

"I have waited for months and months," the man's voice pleaded. "And you do care, little girl! You as good as told me so, 'way back there when you were at school. You—you love me!"

If he had sustained the note struck at that moment, perhaps he might have done with her as he would; but his next sentence drove her back. Without giving time for response, he went impetuously on:

"Any way, it is n't right for you to be living in that forlorn place with only an old woman. I hate those people, with their rubber boots and bad-smelling houses."

"You don't know them," said Joy, suddenly drawing away. "I won't listen when you talk that way. Those old sea captains have owned their ships and have sailed about the world. They are as good as any men, and they are proud."

"I fail to see why," Will responded in exasperation. "So you even go around to their houses! I remember I heard of your being at the florist's—the Aster King, they call him—playing with his baby! My mother would n't like it! We've got to think a little about my people, you see."

"Why?" asked Joy, giving him a direct look that made him turn away.

"Why what?" he counter-queried.

"Why must we think of your people, if I must n't even wonder who mine are?"

"Don't be unreasonable," said Hammond, not noticing that her lip was trembling, for all the courage of her eyes. "It is n't the same thing at all."

"But it seems the same to me," she insisted. "Only, you think of yours and I think of mine."

There was silence for a little, then she said in a low voice: "You won't like my saying it; but sometimes I wonder if a child whose parents have loved each other so much, so much more than usual—it's hard to put in words, Will—if such a child does n't inherit that love. At first I hated the idea of my father being one of the Harbor men, but now—now I'd give anything to find him."

"I don't want to hurt your feelings," remarked Will moodily. "A fellow never knows. He makes the simplest statement, and bang, there, he's put his foot in it again."

"Go on," Joy reassured him. "Be frank. I always like that best."

"Then, I'll tell you what I've been thinking. You were brought up a Marston. He was your grandfather, any way. You are a

Marston, as far as anybody knows, except our two selves—unless——” He looked at her with a new-dawning fear. “You have n’t told it?” he demanded. “You have n’t spoken of it to Tilda—to anybody—to Van Brink?”

“Rob heard what she—my mother said at the last,” Joy answered. “I have never mentioned it to any one.”

“Promise me you won’t.”

“I’d rather be left free. I have to use my judgment now about matters that come up.”

“Well, you *are* a Marston,” Will went on. “The lawyer accepted you as a matter of course. There is n’t a better old name in the country, and it’s the name you’ve always borne. I can’t for the life of me see why not let it go at that.”

“What do you mean by letting it go at that? Not looking for my—for my own father? Not trying to discover who he is?”

“Yes,” said Hammond; “that’s what I mean. Besides”—a tiny flame burned in his eyes as he smiled at her—“besides, you will change the name before long. Tell me, Joy, when can you be ready to change it? The very earliest day?”

But somehow Joy did not melt this time under the ardor of his look and words. She smiled a little, a sad smile in return for his, and said, “I wonder if you would still—still like me, Will, if my father was really one of those men you despise.”

“Don’t think up such conundrums,” he broke in. “I hate that kind of talk. I’d love you if you turned out to be an Indian.”

She laughed a little at that, and he launched forth into plans for their hotel suite in Parkton—when the honeymoon was over. Joy interrupted these rosy fancies after a time.

“Then your Major-man might order you off to Jericho, and what would become of me? You said he asked particularly if you were married, and was pleased when you said no.”

Will’s face clouded. “Trust you for wet-blanketing,” he said. “The Major’s as likely as not to stay right here, and even if we did go, it would n’t be forever. You and I would be married fast and happy, and he could n’t unmarry us. I don’t doubt he would let me bring you along, after all; or Mother would be delighted to have you with her.”

“Could n’t I stay with Tilda?”

“No,” replied Will decidedly. “I’m going to get you away from that nightmare as soon as possible; and, make up your mind, little girl, when I do separate you from them, you’ll never go back. I don’t care for slumming, and I don’t mean my wife shall do it either.”

They were approaching the outskirts of Parkton when he drew a little box from an inner pocket.

"You did n't know I had it," he said triumphantly; "but your—Miss Marston—did! I told her one day when you had gone down to look for Tilda. You think so much of your—Miss Marston—Joy, and you are always regretting things, and wishing you could make it up. This is your opportunity. She wanted you to marry me as soon as possible."

The stone caught the sparkle of May sunshine, and flashed a thousand lights into the girl's troubled eyes. But she shook her head.

"Don't be angry, Will," she begged. "Don't scold me or be angry. I'd rather not take it now."

"Not take it now?" he echoed incredulously. "I've waited, Joy. Why should n't you take it now?"

"It's so serious," she answered. "To me, it seems the same as making a promise or a vow. I can't do it offhand like this."

"Your sister—I mean, Miss Marston——"

"Why don't you say my mother?" Joy asked him.

"I can't realize it, that's all. She wanted you to marry me. She knew about this ring and was glad. Even at the last—you heard her yourself—she asked me to take care of you."

"I did n't think she knew you were in the room that day," said Joy.

"Hold out your hand and let me put this on," he pleaded.

For answer, the girl hid both hands behind her and laughed tremulously at him.

"Wait," she said. "Wait at least—till you see me next time."

"That's a promise," Will took her up at once. "That's a solemn promise, Joy, and I think I'm mighty easy with your whims. I'll keep you to that, though. The next time I see you, I put on the ring."

And arriving just then at the hotel where they were to have luncheon, he stopped his engine, and conducted Joy to the dining-room, not missing one of the glances of admiration cast toward her from the well-groomed people at the tables.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GLIMMER GLASS IN SPRING.

HAMMOND's patient required the best part of the afternoon, so he took Joy back to the Homestead when luncheon was over. The girl felt an exhilarating sense of freedom as soon as Will had left her. Catching up a light sweater, she fluttered once more from the house. Lorton had promised to take her to bob for eels, and though they would not go till after supper, she thought it would be well to consult him as to necessary equipment. At the entrance to The Merry

Clam, however, she met Rob Van Brink coming out, and, to her surprise, he locked the door behind him.

"Why," laughed Joy, out of breath with hurrying, "I want to see Mr. Lorton, and from the way you are fastening up, it seems he is n't here."

Van Brink pointed up the road toward the schoolhouse hill. "Will you walk with me?" he asked. "I'm a free man just this minute. There's not a sick creature in the county. And—you'll think I'm jollying, but I was looking at the Homestead and wishing for courage to ask you to come out."

"Does it require bravery?" she demanded. "I had no idea I was so terrible that any one could be afraid. Where's Mr. Lorton?"

"He's inside," said Rob briefly.

"Then why lock the door?" persisted Joy.

"He's—oh, he is n't well."

"So there is one person sick in the county, after all, and you're not free. Not to mention my disappointment. He was to take me for eels to-night."

"How you do pin a fellow down to truth!" Rob protested. "Never mind the eels. Never mind Lorton. I've looked after him. Come to the woods with me and find May pinks."

"It's too early," she said wilfully. But she turned, nevertheless, and they took their way up the gradual slope of the sandy road, which led a mile farther on into the thicket of pine and holly. Overhead the fish-hawks flew, selecting trees for their great untidy nests, and complaining about it fretfully, as was their nature. Along the bank to either side tangles of wild strawberry in full blossom were interspersed with patches of violets, a rare blue among their cool green leaves.

"I wanted to ask you something," Rob began, after they had passed the schoolhouse, and had watched a bevy of little lads flock out and start down the hill, shooting marbles as they went and arguing each shot.

"The girls will be coming next," said Joy; then added, "Ask it, only I don't promise——"

"But it's a promise I must have," he interrupted. "Don't go on the water with Lorton again. Please give me your word."

Joy's face fell, and her mouth hardened into stubborn lines. "More lecturing," she rebelled. "Any one would think I was ten years old. What is your reason?"

"It is n't safe," said Van Brink. "You know, of course—you must know when you've seen so much of him—that Lorton drinks. It's dangerous."

The girl puckered her brow, then laughed aloud. "Why, you are the very one who told me he knew the river in his sleep. I felt so



comfortable with Mr. Lorton because of what you said about him. Will never liked him, but I trusted you."

If Rob noticed the implied tribute to his own wisdom, he did not show it, but hastened to defend Lorton against outside attack.

"Hammond can't dislike him," he said proudly, "because he does n't know him. Probably never saw him in his life, but takes what he hears as gospel. Lorton's family are fit to stand up with anybody's. He's a gentleman, though Hammond might not think so. He's personally weak, perhaps, but even at that he's better stuff than the Major's rag doll of a son."

"Listen!" said Joy. "Yet you ask me to give up my trip I've counted on so long. Any way, the water's too shallow to hurt a fly."

"I'm sorry I can't agree with you," persisted Rob. "The channel is deep, the moon is full, and there'll be a swift tide running out. Lorton does know the river in his sleep, but he makes bad calculations when he's not quite himself. I guess you'll have to promise."

"What will you do if I don't?" she asked, the dimple showing in her cheek. "Will you tie me up?"

"I'd rather tie *him* up," said Rob. "I wish you'd promise, but never mind. The day is too fine for wrangling, and it isn't often I get you to myself. Look there! Did you wager that May pinks were n't blooming?"

They had entered the woods, and the road, narrowing to a path for two, started its gradual descent to the other valley. Stooping, Rob pushed aside the brownish leafage, and held up a spray of arbutus, rosy-tinted.

"There is n't another perfume in the world that's half so sweet," he told her, as he put the blossom into her hand.

"I want to pick the next," said Joy, poking among the leaves with a stick she had in her hand, and finding nothing. Van Brink watched her approvingly, taking in the dark hair and brows, and the rich red of her lips contrasted against the delicate cheeks and chin; but soon he laughed and said:

"You're too squeamish. Use your hands. The dead leaves can't hurt you, and they must be held back to find where the little rascals hide. Don't let's waste time here, though. I know a place where better ones grow. Come on; it's beyond the Glimmer Glass."

She rose at once, without the jesting demur he half expected; and, looking down, he saw that her eyes had filled with tears.

"Miss Marston," he blurted out in diffident abruptness, "it is n't because of the way I spoke about your going with Lorton? If I seemed rude——"

"No," said Joy; "I was thinking of Del. It's strange to call her my mother, though I often do it over and over to myself. This

place reminds me of her; of that last day, when I felt I ought to stay with her. Oh, if I only had!"

"I should n't have brought you here," Rob said, blaming himself for a clumsy, blundering idiot. But Joy turned to him a face which she no longer sought to keep clear of emotion.

"I *love* to think of her," she explained. "I wish you'd let me. Oh, can't anybody understand how I love to think about her and remember the things she said, the way she looked in the short time I had her? Will always makes me talk of something else, and you——"

"I'm glad you told me," said Rob. "It's like giving me leave to speak. I did n't think I ought to until you said something first. I'm glad I knew your mother. She was brave; she reminded me of a saint, the way she lay there and bore suffering that might have made a man cry out. It has been on my mind for weeks to say you must be proud of such a mother."

Joy looked gratefully at him, but did not speak, and Rob went on: "And there's something else. I am sure she meant me that day when she said, take care of you. She meant me, Joy."

"Will thought, of course—— He's an old friend——"

"She did n't even know Hammond was in the room," Rob broke in. "She knew about me because I carried her there and had been waiting with her, but she could n't have seen Hammond—the place where he was standing."

Joy turned this over in her mind without reply. It fitted well with her own opinion on the subject. Presently Van Brink added:

"I took those words for myself, and I'll give them up to no one. Before you came, she had asked me for a promise, and I made it without hearing what it was, she could n't speak to tell me. Then she said, 'Doctor, you promised,' and she meant me. So you see why I'm going to take care of you."

They walked on together, the man intensely alive to her presence near him, satisfied for the moment to know that she was there, to glance sidewise at the red streak in her hair, to catch faintly now and then the fragrance from the bit of arbutus on her breast. But after a while the uncertainty of things swept over him in a crushing flood: that this was only an hour's walk, one tiny atom snatched from time, and that it might never be repeated. Any day she could go back to the world whence she had come, and be lost to him. The thought pricked him into speech.

"Joy," he said—"Joy, I love you. That's the real reason why I must see that no harm comes to you. You must have known it; you must have felt it, when my heart has been filled with nothing else for weeks. It can't be a surprise. Tell me you're not already—there's not somebody else——"

She was mute, only giving him a look so exquisite that it buoyed him to pour forth his mating song.

"I love you," he repeated. "I used to be contented when I was doctoring sick people and making them forget their troubles, or sitting in the marshes waiting for ducks; but that was n't a man's happiness, the happiness a man is born for. One was work and the other was play, because I was a boy. I'm a man since you came. Nothing can make me happy but you. You, dear, you can make me happy, and I want you so much."

For one delicious moment Joy gave herself to the sweetness of listening, then memory of Will touched her without mercy. Her engagement to Will had been understood almost a year, and she came of stock that took its obligations seriously.

"Don't," she begged. "Don't. I must n't let you."

"If it's because I'm a village boy," Van Brink struck off into a new channel, "that's nothing, Joy, to be ashamed of. Don't wreck us on such a foolish rock as that. Each little community has its strong men and its weak ones. I don't pretend to be very good or smart or wonderful; but we come of the strong men of our tribe, and so I'm not ashamed of what I offer. You would n't refuse to listen just because I'm from Tranquil Harbor, would you?"

"No," said Joy. "Oh, no, it is n't that." Then she went on, speaking with quick vehemence: "You could n't think it was anything like that. You heard what she—she said: that she was my mother, and my father was n't Dean Marston at all. He belonged to your people. He lived somewhere around here, and she called him Gil. I don't know his name."

"If you're one of us," Van Brink said, "it's better for me. Not that I care, Joy, who you are. It's you, dear, I want."

"I must n't listen," she answered miserably.

"Then you've—you've given your word to Hammond?"

"I don't know," she answered. "He is an old friend. Long ago when I was at school— He thinks I have."

"You were engaged to him before you came here—is that what you're trying to say?"

"No—yes," said Joy. "Oh, yes, yes, it's true." And they walked on together in unhappy silence.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A MEETING INSIDE THE MERRY CLAM.

"WHAT'S the past history of George Lorton?" asked young Van Brink that same evening, as he sat smoking with his father before supper.

The senior doctor grunted and then laughed. "Not trying to calk up the seams in that wreck, Rob?" he demanded. "Why don't you build with new timber instead of forever tinkering with driftwood? Build up a practice to pay you in the long run."

"I'll get paid all right, Dad," retorted his son drily. "This interests me. I have curiosity to see if I can do it. Lorton's not exactly driftwood, any way. He seems about as sound as I am, and I don't think drink has mastered him. Tell me what gave him his twist in the wrong direction, if you know."

"Nobody knows," the old man said, growing serious and reminiscent. "It's the first time I ever thought you over-hopeful on a diagnosis, boy. Lorton's too weak to waste time fooling with. Cap'n Lorton was the richest and the highest-spirited man in the county, and he took it hard when George, the only son, turned out a bookish lad, without the proper proportion of iron in his system. The Cap'n meant him for service in a big passenger line, where he was to be ship's master and later on rise to commodore of the fleet. But George never would have had the nerve to hold men under, the way a man's obliged to do if he commands a ship. What little ambition he'd started with, he lost same time he was getting educated. He's well into the forties now; and there's not much chance of changing after the forty-mark is past."

Rob whistled softly. "I took him for fifty-five, at least," he said.

"Then you took him wrong," the doctor declared. "It seems like yesterday George came home from the school his mammy sent him to—came home for her funeral, by the way; and he never was himself again. He would'n't go to sea, and he would'n't work ashore. He read and read and read, but not with any purpose, just to pass away the time. Seemed to be waiting for something to happen that never did."

"Did he marry?"

"No. He was too dreamy for marrying, I guess. He let his property slip away like quicksand, and when it was gone he shut himself up in that boat of his, and then he began to drink."

"Dad," remarked young Rob, "I'll bet you a gramophone to an automobile I can brace Lorton up and make a man of him."

"I'm not fond enough of music, especially the canned variety," his parent said; "but I'll give you some advice for nothing, son. If you've got money, you can buy gramophones and automobiles, too, and the way to make money is looking after the women and children that's going to need pills all their days, and——"

"Oh, drop it," Rob broke in affectionately. "If you wanted me to go in for the full pocket-book, why did n't you preach that sermon to me twenty years ago? What's got into your head of late? You're always lecturing on the finance question."

The old doctor studied his boy, wondering just how candid he might dare to be. "That's right," he said. "I did n't begin the treatment early enough. Sometimes I think I've been wrong not to have turned you out keener after money. Maybe there's no danger; only, when I see you hankering after autos and things you always turned up your nose at before—if you set your heart on something that came high and you could n't pay the price—I'd—I'd—by heavens, Rob, I don't know what I would n't do to my easy, lazy, old-fogy self!"

"Never mind, Dad," Rob responded, when a full minute had passed. "I'm sure the machines and things like that have nothing to do with it. What I've set my heart on I could n't have bought, it seems, at any price. But you understand how a fellow might get tired of doling out pills to other chaps', families, and grinning at their babies; so I'm for thanking God when something to puzzle over comes along. That's one reason I want to try my hand on Lorton." The voice was so unnatural that his father looked sharply at him, and, catching the pain in the young man's eyes, was wise enough to let it pass without comment, only thinking dumbly:

"He's asked her, and the no of that kitten-blind girl seems to him like denying him life itself."

The two smoked quietly after that until Rob began to talk again, his voice regaining its customary cheerful note, while the old doctor showed pathetic desire to approve whatever might be suggested.

"I'm glad Lorton is as young as that," Rob said. "It makes the cure more certain. I've worked it out on three already, and I *know* that if you can give a man a motive that seems to him worth while—vital, big enough—so he will pull with you—see?—and not against you—at the same time cleaning his system of alcohol by strong physic and keeping him from swallowing more for one week, say—the trick is done."

"It's worth trying," his father said; "but you got to sit beside Lorton every minute, at least till you're sure he's working with you. If he's on the side against your cure—I tell you, my lad, a man that wants drink will get it in spite of angels above and doctors below and the devil under the earth. Most likely you'll find him off again when you go back, and you'll have to sober him and take a new start to-morrow. Then don't let anything call you away. The weather's warm now, and I'll see to the other patients for you."

"Oh, he won't get a drop this time while I'm away," said Rob, with confidence. "I'm smart enough for that. We had a little talk; I ransacked his boat and took away the bottle, the only one, I'll swear, in that place to-day. I left provisions and a couple of new magazines he's been wanting; then I locked him inside The Merry Clam, and I've got the only key safe in my pocket."

The supper-bell tinkled at the moment, and the two rose; but the

father had one further question to be answered. "What motive are you going to offer Lorton?" he asked. "What reward that's big and important enough to make him change his whole life, and bring out courage and will-power he's never shown before? It'll be hard for him, Rob, hard for a fellow that's been lying on his back to stand up and walk. He's got to *want* to awful' bad. Highfalutin' talk and sniffles about the hereafter, or self-respect, or what-do-other-people-think, won't reach through the skin of a man like Lorton."

"That's the only weak spot in my plan," confessed Rob, laughing. "I have n't thought of anything good enough yet."

"Does he know what you're up to?"

"Lorton takes me about as seriously as a lion takes a chipmunk. He thinks it's a joke to drink because I advise him not to. I can't help loving the man, although he tries my patience to the breaking-point."

"Do you ever feel sorry you didn't take the chance to go round the world with the Major's son?"

"Not by a long shot," said the young doctor promptly. "I'd like the money well enough, of course; I'm not saying I would n't. But there's no handle to get hold of a fool pig like that boy. He'll go from bad to worse. Lorton has got a fair start already, because I searched his cabin even to the bunk, and he'll drink nothing but coffee till I get back."

Rob's optimism, however, was doomed to dashing, for, approaching The Merry Clam at nine o'clock, the key ready in his hand, he noticed by the moonlight that a trap-door to the roof stood open, and realized that his unwilling patient had escaped. Exclaiming under his breath, he let himself in, and swept a look about the place for a possible clue as to what direction Lorton might have taken.

The bed lay neat and smooth in one corner; the small kitchen stove held a banked-up fire that might be stirred to a blaze at any moment; there was a pile of eel-pots stacked beside the ladder leading to the trap; every object appeared to be as usual, until he glanced at the bookshelf running around three walls. He was quite familiar with the array of books, but it struck him that never before had he missed a volume from its place, which fact made more noticeable a gap between "Lucile" and the Bible. He went over and, thrusting a hand into the empty space, drew a flask of brandy from behind the Holy Writ! Lorton had scored in the first round of their duel!

Disgusted and chagrined, Van Brink stepped outside to toss the bottle as far as possible across the water; then he entered the boat again, took a book at random from the shelf, and sat down. But he could not read. He could not think of Lorton now. Over and over in his mind revolved the events of the afternoon, and his fancy dwelt with



tenderness on Joy. That look he had won from her in the first moment of his speaking! It was more true, more spontaneous, than the words she had spoken later. How foolish he had been! The girl—cared! Was he really to be cheated of his love by a shallow chap like Hammond? He had taken Joy's nay like a tame dog, he told himself with a sudden furious shame. She was not yet lost! He would go to her—now!

On the heels of this resolve came the recollection that Joy had spoken of an engagement with Lorton for that night. She had made no promise that she would give it up. His warnings had only made her laugh.

He started to his feet, reaching for cap and coat, and as he did so the volume he had held fell to the floor and lay there, sprawled open to show its title-page. Below the gold and red "Lucile" was an inscription, a name he had heard from boyhood: "George Ingoldsby Lorton"; but it was written in a girlish hand, with great, flourishy capitals so much larger than the other letters that they stood out alone, seeming to form a little word all by themselves; and under it followed the words, "from Del." He stared at it, then repeated the syllable those initials spelled.

"Gil!" he said. "Gil! She's Lorton's daughter! That's the motive I've been looking for! I can make him see it's worth-while to be a man!" He was turning away when the door burst open and Will Hammond appeared.

"Where's Joy?" he asked. "Tilda said I'd find her here."

"You can see she is n't," Van Brink replied.

Hammond's eyes fell on the book, and he also read the three-lettered word, but he did not comment aloud, only saying to himself, "Gil! By the Lord Harry, that drunken fellow Lorton! I wonder if this young gentleman knows—it might be, he wouldn't recall—Well, the chief thing now is to get Joy away before she finds out, and it's good I have the way to do it."

Van Brink went out of the house-boat and walked along the shore, scanning the moonlit waters as far as he could see. Nowhere was there an eel-light visible, and presently he took heart, thinking his escaped patient might have gone to the Harbor and that Joy was safe at home. Still, Tilda had told Hammond to try to find the girl outside. He ran to the dock and found that Lorton's skiff was gone, and without more ado he jumped into his flat-bottomed shooting-boat. A few mighty strokes carried him off from shore, but on further reflection he put in again. It might be impossible to reach them if his light shell got caught in the current, and the part of wisdom would be to have assistance.

Hammond had lingered inside The Merry Clam, taking the dingy

"Lucile" up and examining the writing with great care. Then, on an impulse he could not have explained himself, and of which he felt ashamed, he tore out the leaf and thrust it into his pocket. On the threshold he met Van Brink.

"I don't know for certain," the latter said, "but I have reason to think Lorton has taken Miss Marston out on the water. There's a furious tide; the man's drinking, and it isn't safe. I'm going as far as I can in my boat, and if you want to run your machine around by the road——"

"That's what I meant to do," Hammond broke in.

"Take the road to the Harbor Beach," insisted Van Brink, feeling there was too much at stake to let questions of politeness interfere. "Be sure not to run your car into the sand. You'll have to leave it at the pavilion and turn to the right and walk along the ocean to the inlet. From the dike you ought to be able to see the whole river, and——"

"Thank you," interrupted Hammond rather curtly. "I know. Leave that part to me."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WEAK MAN OF THE TRIBE

DURING the hour when the Van Brinks were taking counsel of each other, Joy passed through the most poignant grief that had ever been her portion. True, the loss of Del had shocked her; the teasing uncertainty about her parentage had stolen away a lingering quality of childhood and changed her to a woman; but it was only since the silencing of Rob's song that she felt as if she herself had died, or such portion of her as could be young and happy. Now she realized that she had drifted along into an engagement with Will which she found odious. She never dreamed of breaking it. It seemed to her that she was bound in every way to fulfil the contract she had made by tacit consent, just as if she had spoken an actual promise.

So she sat on the balcony alone, fighting the terror from her, heedless alike of the chill in the gathering dusk, and of the shadowy green and red reflections cast by a lighted train as it crossed the river. She still wore her sweater, and in her hands she clutched Rob's hat, piled to overflowing with the now drooping flowers. She could see his fair hair lifted in the breeze, to show the streak of white across the brow, above where the tan began. At Tilda's summons, though, she put the arbutus into the steerage cabin and went down to eat supper, if she could, and pretend that nothing had happened.

"The Family's coming back next week," Mrs. Dunn greeted her;

adding as she saw Joy's look of startled inquiry, "I wrote 'em about you, of course, and you can stay right on."

"I'd rather be with you," said Joy.

"Then, I don't admire your taste nor sense," snapped her companion. "I'd rather be by myself, but if I got to have somebody, I'd never choose an old woman crank."

"I know you," the girl insisted. "You're not cranky with me. I like you."

"How much?" Mrs. Dunn took her up on this. "Like me enough to take a little jawing without getting your dander up?"

Joy tried to smile. "Are you going to scold me, too?" she asked. "All right. I like you well enough not to get my dander up, as you say, but I won't promise to promise——"

"I got too much sense to ask for promises from flyaway girls that thinks they know the world," said Tilda. "I don't even look for you to take advice, but I'd ought to tell you, just the same. First, though: I got a shack of a house in the Harbor, that's cold in winter and hot in summer. The dust lays an inch thick into it and out of it sence they got to running autos past my corner, and I won't have the road oiled because the dust from that is worse than the Lord's old-fashioned dirt dust. I hate my house these days, but, such as it is, you're welcome to come along and try it."

"Can I pay you the same as here? So I'll feel all right about it. Please."

"You can pay me. Now for the jawing. Where you going to-night?"

"With Mr. Lorton, on the river, after eels."

Tilda rose and began removing the dishes. "Don't you go," she counselled. "George Lorton don't know perigee moon from 'pogee when he's drinking. You need n't to argue or tell me you can take care of yourself, and you'll be careful, and all that foolery. I don't ask you to make a promise you'll hate me for, or break, either one. Only, I tell you to stay away from Lorton." And without allowing time for reply either good or bad, she betook herself to the kitchen.

After a moment of indecision, Joy went out of the room and passed around the corner toward the lawn. She stood solitary and depressed, watching the moon rise above the rim of the ocean, when the figure of Lorton swung into view from direction of The Merry Clam.

"The moon's too shiny for eeling," he said, without preface. "I guess we'll have to wait till the next dark night."

The girl hesitated. Inside the house there promised nothing but the old tormenting thoughts, and she dreaded to be alone with them. She felt no fear of the water. The man seemed perfectly well and steady, and, as she had reminded Rob, she had good authority as to

Lorton's skill and knowledge. Her heart beat high with longing to escape the prison of her troubles.

"It's the finest night we've had this spring," she said. "Why can't we go, any way, even if we can't get eels?"

Lorton laughed admiringly. "You've got pluck for a city-bred girl," he said. "Maybe you don't know the tide's racing out like a waterfall, and the wind's blowing straight to the ocean. It'll raise your hair on end."

"It won't," declared Joy, her anxiety to go increasing with opposition. "You said you'd take me. You ought to keep your word."

"Ask Tilda," said Lorton. "If she says you can——"

"She does n't have to say anything about it. I'm ready. I have a heavy sweater on. Ah, please don't disappoint me."

He turned toward the dock. "I'll run the boat up on shore," he said, "and take you out far enough for you to see."

She ran after him, heard the boat scrape the pebbles, and let him help her over the slimy grass into the bow. He pushed off, and, leaping to his place, began rowing with easy movement of his arms. She had often seen him guide the skiff in and out among the crab-cars tied to their stakes, wondering at his audacity in taking hair-breadth chances and never so much as touching; but suddenly it seemed to her that this time he was less careful. They grazed one of the cars, and only by instantaneous jerking of her hand away did she escape getting a mashed finger. Cool-headed and brave as she was by nature, the little incident unnerved her.

"I think we'd better go back now," she said. But Lorton only laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, I got to make the voyage nicer than that," he answered. "Long as we're this far, we'll just take a little moonlight row. Look out now for the railroad bridge. . . . There, we cleared all right."

They were clear of the bridge indeed, but the roll of the water had lifted the boat, bringing the girl's head close to the massive framework.

"Are you afraid?" he asked presently.

"I love the water," she answered. "I don't see now how I could have lived inland all my life, I love this so. No, I'm not a bit afraid."

"Well, I don't advise you to get too brave all of a sudden," he said indulgently. "I might take a notion to try you out and find if you're seaworthy or just talking."

"Try me," she dared him, looking about over the placid stream.

"Some other time," he jested, "after we both get our lives insured. Why, if we once rounded the point of the marsh meadows, the current would snap us up like flies and sweep us into the breakers. Have you ever seen the inlet where the river rushes out?"

"Yes, from the Harbor Beach," she answered. "They ought to call it the outlet, the way the flood goes hurrying by."

"Then you know there's a dike across the end of the Harbor Beach," said Lorton, "to keep the water out. That's 'way over on the left from us; and on the right side of the inlet, as we're facing, is what we've dubbed the Other Beach, because it's not the Harbor one. We might land and walk to it, if you like."

They moved on for a while in silence, Joy trailing her hand in the cool water, and watching the moon cast off her ocean film and grow to silver clearness as she mounted higher. The man's voice broke in on these meditations.

"How did you happen to come to the Homestead?" he asked.

"I came with my sister—mother," Joy explained; it had become an extremely awkward thing for her to speak of Del in the old relationship, and the new one was no easier. She hurried over this and added, "I just loved the looks of your house. The very day after I got here I saw it and went wild with curiosity. Did you know I used to watch it?"

"No," said Lorton. "They come and go, the people at the Homestead, and I never notice. Maybe you'll think it strange, but right this minute I don't know your name."

"Really?" she laughed. "What do you call me?"

"When I'm with you, I don't call you at all; when I think of you, it's in my mind 'the little girl at the Homestead.'"

"That's very nice," said Joy; "but you must know me better, so I'll tell you now. I've been here since New Year's. You must have heard about my sister—I mean—I thought everybody had heard because it was so sad. She was ill when we got here, and—she died. I am alone now."

"But you said you came with your sister and your mother?" he remarked.

"No," Joy told him. "You misunderstood."

"I never heard," said Lorton. "It might seem funny to you, but I keep away from the people around. I was not home then, maybe, or maybe I was——" He paused, realizing all at once that the only excuse he could give was one he did not care to offer.

"Perhaps you were n't well," said Joy gently. "My name is Marston, Georgiana Marston."

There were two or three more steady strokes of the oars before Lorton let them slip, leaning forward to scan the girl in the moonlight. "Marston," he repeated slowly. "Did you say Marston?"

"Yes," she answered.

"I guess it's a common name," he said. "A good many Marstons scattered about the country."

"I never knew any others," she replied. "Dean Marston, who had a school for boys years ago—he was my—I mean, it's his family."

There was no comment on this. Lorton fumbled for the oars and loosened one of the oarlocks so that it fell from its socket, and he lost a moment finding and replacing it. His fingers had become clumsy with their shaking, and his eyes seemed to betray him by a mist that clouded them, making calculation indistinct. Joy, however, talked on in her bright way.

"I never was so happy over anything as when I got to the seashore country. I don't know how any one lives far inland, where they never see the ocean or smell the pine and the salt together. Oh, when I was turned loose! And I loved Del so——"

"Del!" echoed Lorton; he spoke in the same dull, unbelieving tone he had used when he repeated the other name.

"She was my sister," said Joy, using the old term from force of habit, then, remembering again, "That is, she was n't my sister, but I was brought up to think she was, and so——"

She checked herself with a cry of alarm. "We're going past the point of the marshes!" she exclaimed. "Look, Mr. Lorton, look where we're going to!"

He gave a quick glance over his shoulder, then spoke sharply. "Hush!" he ordered. "My God! Don't talk!"

For several minutes they had been drifting nearer to the crescent's tip beyond which the waters joined for the last mad rush to the sea. The oars, not yet recaptured, lay across Lorton's feet. He reached out, got them, and tried with all his might to bring the boat about, but it was too late. Already the waves had lifted them from the Thoroughfare into the current, where the river with a force greater than any pair of human arms whirled them along almost as fast as the surface of the waters ran. More than once, indeed, his stupendous straining had the effect of holding them back for the space of a breath, and at such times Lorton spoke.

"There's only one chance," he said. "If I can work *across* the current, I might touch the dike. Then you'll climb up. Get down on the inner side; there won't be enough water seeped through to hurt you."

"But you'll be with me," Joy replied.

The girl sat still, holding to the boat on either side, mechanically measuring with her eye the distance to the dike's dark line and comparing that with the wall of surf which rose and broke into clouds of feathery spray. She felt no such nervous fears as had terrified her when they scraped the crab-car, and was calm, although she reckoned they were losing little by little.

"Did you say Del Marston?" Lorton asked presently, and Joy wondered at the irrelevancy of the question.



"Yes," she called back in answer.

"She was your—you said she was your——"

"She was my mother," the girl replied.

"And you—you're about eighteen years old?"

"I'm eighteen and a half," the response came to him.

There were no further words, for now Lorton was fighting within himself as bitter warfare as he waged against the waters. A great shame came upon him. The wasted years when he had sulked and waited for Del to humble herself and deny that letter! He would have gone back if she had begged him! The empty, squandered, apathetic years after the first sharp pain was over and he had become indifferent! Strange he had never dreamed there might be a child!

If he told the girl—— No, if he waited until the knowledge would make her glad; never proud, perhaps, for in his awakening he was very humble; but not sick with hatred, as she would be if she knew now. What was the rigmarole young Van Brink was giving him to-day? That he could make him over new!

"If there is a God," he whispered fiercely, "listen! I *will* be made new! I will! I will!"

He dared not look around to gauge the distances, but Joy, divining his want, called out that they were gaining, and he bent to greater effort. So inch by inch he fought a way across the passage of the flood until the boat, seized in an eddy, slapped heavily against the wooden wall, and would have rocked away again but that Lorton, already on his feet, cast his rope over an iron hook projecting from the dike.

"Hurry," he directed the girl. "Come to me on all-fours, or you'll be jerked out. Come, Joy!"

When she had obeyed and he knew she was beside him, he held to the rope for steadiness, lifted her with his left arm, and by a miracle of strength and deftness swung her to the ledge. It was a feat that might have roused the pride of any man, and for poor Lorton, the weakling of his tribe, it meant the flowering and the consummation of all the powers within him. He should have been able to climb up beside her; but already he was failing.

The boat lurched horribly beneath him; his head was confused by brandy, and by the violence of the shock which Joy's disclosure caused. Twice he pulled up and twice slipped back. The girl stood looking down, her terror almost stilled when she felt the solid dike beneath her, for it seemed a simple matter for her companion to scramble up. A third time he lifted himself, then the hook, rusty from disuse, gave way, and he was thrown backwards once more. She saw the skiff whipped seaward on a wave; she saw Lorton clutch the oars and move his arms. She made no sound, only standing on the narrow ledge, looking out to the ocean, and slowly stiffening with cold.

## CHAPTER X.

VAN BRINK FINDS ONE RUNAWAY, AND HAMMOND FINDS THE OTHER.

ROB VAN BRINK rowed to the Thoroughfare with all the speed he could muster, aided by the wind and the outgoing tide. The night was so brilliant to the eye and so peaceful to the ear that after a little he felt inclined to laugh at his own fears. Three times he stood up in the flat-bottomed boat to sweep the river for signs of Joy and Lorton, but the expanse of water stretched unbroken both sides the crescent marshland.

"Dad would say I was a fool," he told himself. "There's a moving-picture show at the Harbor to-night. Lorton's fond of such things. Joy would be game if he asked her, and she's child enough for anything, so maybe——"

Yet in his heart he knew that Joy was not child enough for the moving-picture show after their talk at the Glimmer Glass. Besides, Lorton's boat had disappeared from the dock. He could n't get around that fact.

As he neared the point where the Thoroughfare joined the swifter stream and felt the suction of the tide, he realized anew that his light shell could not live in such a current. So he ran inshore on the mainland side, where he commanded a view of the inlet, and again he felt relief to see that the water was clear of boats. A certain dark speck on the dike across was too tiny to catch his eye at such a distance.

"If he brought her out for a moonlight row," he reasoned, "they might put ashore this side and walk on to the Other Beach. It's certain they're not bobbing for eels."

With that thought in mind he drew his boat higher, thrust the anchor well into the sand, and tramped away. The ocean front, however, was as solitary as the river.

He had turned to retrace his steps when something in the rolling surf caught his attention, and he ran to meet the thing it brought. High into the air the wave carried its burden, held it there the space of a breath, then swept it on to Van Brink's feet.

"Lorton!" said Rob, the catch gripping his throat once more. "That means—— Oh, Joy, Joy!"

He set mechanically about the customary treatment for the drowning, but he soon saw that Lorton was past human succor. When he was sure he could do nothing more he covered the dead man's face with a handkerchief, and went to watch the ocean for that other precious burden it might bring in.

Meantime Hammond had stopped only to look after his searchlights before racing to the Harbor Beach. When he struck the sand

he left his machine, and, turning to the right, hurried in direction of the dike.

At length he could distinguish the dark line of the sea wall, and he quickened his pace. He was not actually alarmed. He was only provoked. He knew nothing of tides, and took no interest in them. Joy ran risks every day with these fishermen friends of hers, but she always got home safe and sound. He meant to get up on the dike and look for the boat; but necessity for this was spared by sight of an erect figure on the ledge.

"Joy!" cried Hammond. "Is that you, Joy?"

She did not stir, and he called again:

"Joy! Here! Look this way, not out to sea! What are you doing there? You're not hurt, are you?"

She kept her eyes staring toward the ocean, while Hammond reached the dike. "Are you hurt—or anything?" he asked a second time.

"No," said Joy, without looking, and her calm voice deceived him. He laughed with relief that was not altogether free from irritation.

"Reach down your hand," he ordered. "Both hands. Come, jump. It is n't far."

With her face twisted aside in the effort not to lose sight of the sea, she did as she was told, but, once upon the sands, she ran forward, straining to see into the spray. Hammond followed her.

"Come on, Joy," he begged. "I have the car at the bathing-pavilion. I'll help you if you get tired. I have bully news. It'll make you feel like an evening star."

She pulled away, still intent on the breakers as they feathered in the silvery light. "It's getting late," said Hammond. "I have—we both have dozens and dozens of things to see to before to-morrow. Come on. I can hardly wait to tell you."

"You have n't even asked," she said—"you have n't asked anything—how I got to such a place."

"I asked if you were all right, and you said you were."

"But—about— Oh, Will, Mr. Lorton—"

"Lorton!"—there was a savage note in the laugh he gave. "Why should I ask about Lorton? Don't remind me of him. He need n't come back expecting to find you here. He brought you into that howling flood and left you! Suppose I had n't followed! Suppose you had lost your balance, standing up there with the wind getting colder and stronger every minute! Lorton's out there doing some of their stunts in the current. Come, Joy."

"Don't!" she cried. "You shan't—you shan't say such things to me! He's good! He could have climbed up if he had n't lifted me first. Oh, I could see him in the little boat, moving the oars, then he disappeared. Oh, Will!"

For the moment his selfishness was checked, and his voice was softer as he said, "Come, Joy. I want to take you home. You are worn-out."

"He's out there," she answered, pointing to the ocean. "He helped me to the dike, and he fell back——"

To do Hammond justice, his was an optimistic nature, not given to borrowing trouble, and he honestly believed that Lorton had reached land somewhere, somehow.

"You can't do him any good by waiting," he urged; then, struck by a new hope, he added, "The wash of the water is toward the Other Beach, across the inlet. If you saw him in the boat, it must have been driven to shore on that side, and he's there, of course."

She seized on this at once. "Alive?" she demanded. "Alive, Will, all safe and well?"

"Come to the car," coaxed Hammond. "I'll run around over the wagon bridge to the Other Beach and see. I promise."

She gave in without further protest, and they walked rapidly to where the machine was waiting. Joy did not know that she was cold and numb, and she rebelled at being wrapped in the heavy robes, but he did not heed her objections. He had command of the situation now, and he meant to keep it.

"Joy," he said presently, turning to her and not trying to hide the elation of his voice, "I have the dandiest news. The Major just told me at the dinner table. We sail for Norway to-morrow, to be gone a year at least, and probably longer. My contract is all drawn up and signed. To-morrow, Joy, to-morrow."

There was no response, but he went on without seeming to notice the lack: "We're going. That's the best of it. We're going. You and I—that makes 'we,' does n't it?"

"He was strong enough to force the boat across the current to the dike," said Joy; "and he got the oars into his hands again. Oh, can't we go faster?"

Hammond swore silently, and aloud gave an impatient groan. "Listen to me, Joy," he said. "You *must* listen. This is no joke. This is about the most important thing that has ever come to you and me. We've got to face it. We are going to be married right away, to-morrow morning, and we sail at three. The Major fixed up the salary like a king—I didn't think it was in him to be so generous."

Again there was no answer. They were making speed, and the night wind cut their faces as it whipped past. Hammond had kept his gladness pent up to the extreme limit of his powers, and nothing could have kept him from speaking of it now.

"The beauty of it was, I brought him to my terms," he laughed.

"He wanted a man who was free and would have nothing in his head except the mamma's-darling patient; but he was so all-fired keen on keeping me, you see, that when I stuck out for marrying, he gave in. Oh, Joy, is n't it wonderful how things come out? We need n't have worried so. You might just as well have taken the ring, as I wanted you to. Any way, I have your promise; and this is the next time I see you. Wait till we get inside that Homestead!"

They had reached the hotel now and he was shutting off his engine, when Joy gave a cry and caught his arm.

"Don't," she ordered. "We're going to the Other Beach. You promised. I would n't have come away if you had n't promised."

Will's temper was sorely tried. "You don't really want to go," he argued. "Please do as I wish this time. What's the use? Why, these Harbor men are like seagulls in the water, as much at home as on the land. You can be sure Lorton got ashore on the Other Beach, and is home by now, or thawing out in some cheerful bar-room."

The girl struggled in the folds of her wrappings, threw them off, and stepped down to the ground. She was faint and giddy. The very moon in the sky overhead was spinning about, and the lighted window of the Homestead dining-room seemed first to elongate and then to dwindle to a tiny point.

"That's right"—Will's voice reached her vaguely. "Come. We'll go inside."

"I'm going to the Other Beach," she answered, and took a step away from the house. But next minute she collapsed into hysterical weeping, for the first time in her life. Will ran to summon Mrs. Dunn.

"Help me get Miss Marston in," he directed. "She's had a shock, and she's cold and frightened. I suppose you've seen people in that condition before, and know——"

Tilda pushed past him. "About the time you was playing with a rattle," she remarked, "I was taking care of sick folks."

Joy threw herself onto the woman's breast, and the gaunt arms closed about her, as she sobbed, "I went! You told me not to, and I went! He did n't want to take me, and I made him do it! He saved my life, but he's lost! He's dead!"

"Now, Joy," Hammond began, but Tilda paid no attention to him. She led Joy into the room and put her in the easy-chair, still holding a cold little hand in one of hers, and searching the pale face as if seeking there the decision as to what she should do. It was scarcely a minute before she had made up her mind, and, turning to Hammond, she said:

"If you really want to help, Dr. Hammond, won't you run your car to the drug-store in town and get some aromatic spirits of ammonia?"

Will hesitated. "It is absolutely necessary that I should talk with Miss Marston to-night," he said.

"She don't look much like talking now," snapped Tilda.

"I'll tell you," explained Hammond, with dignity: "Miss Marston and I have been engaged for months, since before she came to Tranquil Harbor. We are to be married to-morrow morning, and at three o'clock we sail for Europe. It is unfortunate that she should have had this fright just now. I hope you will do what you can to make her—to help her recover——"

Joy broke into fresh weeping. "Tilda," she said, "I want to go to the Other Beach and see if Mr. Lorton's there. Oh, I want to go!"

"If the good Lord had given me an automobile," remarked Mrs. Dunn, "I'd run it around till I found out what the poor child is hankering to know. But talking about Europe sounds smarter, I suppose."

Hammond turned to Joy. "I'm going," he told her. "Try to get a good night's sleep, little girl, and expect me early in the morning. I'd stay right here only the Major was particular about my being with the boy from eleven till he gets back himself for breakfast. If I don't show up, all our plans might fall to pieces at the last."

"Will you go to the Other Beach?" asked Joy.

"Yes," he promised. "So put it off your mind, and let Mrs. Dunn give you the powder I'm leaving with her. I wish you pleasant dreams."

He bent and kissed her cheek, but she made no reply to either his words or his caress.

## CHAPTER XI.

### JOY MAKES UP HER MIND.

"THE first time she ever got a bee in her bonnet," grumbled Hammond, running his car across the wagon bridge; "and sick, too, hysterics—nervous as the dickens. It's awkward, just when the chance to pull out happens along. But I won't give up! I'll take her away to-morrow, and she'll thank me for it when she's herself again."

A glance at his watch told him he had no time to lose, since he was to go on duty at eleven, and any irritation of the Major might result in an entire change of plan; but Joy would surely ask about his promise, and having kept it would help persuade her.

He was obliged to leave the machine where the hard roadbed ended, and he stalked along, looking about for possible signs of Lorton. As he expected, he saw no one, and he was turning back when he came upon the body outstretched on the sands, a handkerchief covering the features. Startled from his smug dreams, he stared down at it, made as if to lift the cloth, decided it was unnecessary, and in the second



of irresolution became conscious of a man standing not a hundred feet away, nearer the ocean and seemingly intent on the swelling surf. By the height and fine poise of the head he recognized Rob, and called out:

"Van Brink! Van Brink!"

But the wind, having shifted, brought the words back inland, and the figure remained immovable, silhouetted against the sky. Hammond was on the point of shouting again when a new thought arrested him, a thought which made him feel ashamed, though he did not reject it.

The dead man must be Lorton! If Joy learned the truth right now, it could do her no good, he argued. The whole thing was old dead sentiment at best, he added, angry that his better self should raise a bothersome question.

"Miss Marston did n't take much pains to hunt up her husband while she was living," he said resentfully. "Why saddle Joy with a load she's not to blame for? I'll get her away."

He glanced down again, hesitated a last time in recognition of his conscience, then retreated rapidly across the Beach to his machine. Some day, when Joy was married to him, he would tell her all about it. He could break to her with great tenderness the secret that Lorton had been her father—some far-off day when the ocean lay between her and Lorton's kind.

"Any way," he persisted, in a vehement attempt to justify himself—"any way, I called Van Brink. I'm obliged to give my patient first consideration. It's not my fault Van Brink did n't hear."

All through the night Rob kept watch, patrolling the Beach up and down, up and down, his eyes stinging hot, his body chilled and sometimes shivering as with an ague. He had inherited a love for the sea, but in those hours he hated it, and never again through his whole life did he master the loathing created then.

At daybreak two gunners who were out for snipe found him there, and pieced out something near the truth from the curt replies which he gave their questions.

"You'll leave us here now," said one of them. "You'll go home and send help—a wagon—to bring him to the Harbor."

"Go yourself, Dod," Rob answered, not taking his eyes from the ocean. "I'll stay here."

The other man caught him by the shoulders. "You'll come with me," he ordered. "Dixon can wait. You're blue with cold. What good'll that do you—to come down with pneumonia?"

"Pneumonia the devil!" Rob replied, and fought his clutch away.

"Be a man," his friend advised. "I don't know what's eating you, Rob Van Brink, but be man enough, and most likely it'll turn you loose."

Rob looked at him with burning eyes. "A man!" he repeated bitterly. "It's too late, Dod! There's a girl out there in the ocean, and it's my fault."

Nevertheless, he allowed himself to be dragged away, and Jenks got him into the boat. "You take these oars and row," he ordered then. "Get your blood to circulating. Want to suicide yourself this morning?"

"I'd just as soon," said Rob.

"How about it?" Jenks rejoined, with stinging scorn. "A fine picture of a son you are, for the old doctor and Aunt Caroline to build on! I don't know what girl it was, but I'll bet she had more grit herself than what you've got!"

"Shut up!" said Rob. "Don't you talk about her!" But he felt the tension snap, and the reaction toward wholesome sanity set in.

They landed on the Homestead lawn, and Tilda, watching from the dining-room, opened the door and beckoned.

"You found Lorton," she said. "I know by the look of you, you found him."

"Lorton, yes," said Van Brink wearily; "but Joy——"

"You need n't begin to Joy me," Tilda interrupted. "You can't see her no more than I let the other. She's sick, and where's the wonder? The selfishness of menfolk——"

"Sick!" Rob's eyes opened to a stare, and he caught at Mrs. Dunn's hand. "Joy—you mean—Joy——"

"Joy and Joy and Joy," said Tilda. "What's into the man? You been sleeping on the beach and you got dazed, I guess. I been up pretty near all night myself, since the girl came back, and Mr. Monkey-Doctor with her!"

"If she's not well, maybe I ought to see her," suggested Van Brink; but Mrs. Dunn replied with her most forbidding laugh.

"Not much," she declared. "No more whippersnappers around this ship while I'm master. You're as mushy as Hammond, Rob, and you'd ought to be ashamed."

All Tilda's vinegar could not sour the sweetness of the tidings she had given, and Rob tried to smile, but he soon grew grave again.

"Lorton's drowned," he said. "He's on the Other Beach, and Dod Jenks has gone to the Harbor after help. I'm the one that must tell Joy."

"When you was four years old," remarked Mrs. Dunn enigmatically, "I spanked you for advising me how to sew your pockets." Then her angular face softened. "Come on in, Rob," she said. "Come in, son, and I'll fix your breakfast. You look done up."

He thought a little. "Dad and Mother will know from Jenks," he said, and took his place at the long table. He could n't eat, but he

drank the strong coffee without protest, too weary to think beyond the moment; and it was Tilda who spoke at length.

"I bet I would n't let any Parkton swell carry off my girl from under my nose," she said, without apparent connection with anything that had gone before. Rob looked sharply at her.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Long as you got something inside you, I don't mind telling. Hammond's going to marry her, going to marry her to-day, and he's took passage to sail at three. If you'd had gumption enough to snap up the Major on that offer——"

"Did Joy say so?" Rob interrupted.

"Joy ain't saying much of anything," she answered. "Hammond's the one that said so. The girl's sick, I told you. I could n't have kept her from hiking out for the Other Beach last night, only I had a sleeping-powder and give it to her."

"Let me go up and see her."

"What could you do?" inquired Tilda provokingly. "You ain't one of these Lochinvars like we used to spout poetry about in the readers at school. You could n't run away with her, could you?"

"Let me see her," Rob insisted. "I love her, Aunt Tilda! No use any longer trying to pretend! I love her, and I'm going to see her. If you don't take me up, I'll——"

"No, you won't," said Tilda. "Keep ca'm. I'll ask her when the sun's a little higher."

There was no need, however, to inform Joy of Rob's presence in the house. After the drug had numbed her body she had lain still, holding herself as rigid as during that hour on the dike, seeing in imagination the rushing waters, and the helpless boat with the dark figure clutching for the oars. Beyond the first outburst, she had been unable to talk with Tilda of the horror, and it clung the heavier because she could not share the burden. But in the early dawn, left alone, she had crept from bed and dressed herself, with a pitiful determination to get to the Other Beach. She could not stand suspense another hour! In the fever of this mood, she caught the murmur of voices coming through the grating into the steerage bedroom—indistinct and hazy, Mrs. Dunn's sharp tones, then an answer. All at once balm fell upon her anguish. Rob Van Brink was there! By the time Tilda had climbed the stairs, Joy's decision was ready.

"Please bring him up," she cried before the messenger spoke. "I'll go out on the balcony. Oh, I can't wait. He'll tell me the truth!"

Rob found her at the railing gazing out to sea, but she turned at once and said, "You never try to put me off and change the subject. Mr. Lorton—oh, I made him go! He didn't want to, and I persuaded him! I think he's dead!"

Rob knew that nothing less than truth would serve. "He's dead, Joy," he said. "I came to tell you. He was my friend, you remember. I loved him and admired him."

"Where is he?" she asked. "Not—oh, he's not out there in the water? I think I'll die if he's—out there in the cold water."

Van Brink drew her to the easy-chair and wrapped a rug about her. "Listen, Joy," he said. "I've been watching with him all night, and I've left him with good friends. Later you shall see him for yourself, so you'll be sure. Is that what you want to know?"

"Yes," she answered simply, satisfied for the moment. But she soon thought of other questions. "How did you——" she began. "Where—— How did you happen to be there?"

"I went to look for you when I missed his boat," he explained. "I followed through the Thoroughfare, landed on the right side, and walked to the Other Beach. Later I found him there."

"And you brought him back?"

"I waited on the beach all night. I've just come back now. I—— I thought—— I was so terrified because I thought——"

"Were you all alone? Did n't you see Will—anybody—on the beach at half-past ten?"

"Dod Jenks was the first man I saw—this morning."

He was wondering whether to tell her the other news he bore, when she reached out both hands and said, "I knew you would tell me the truth. I won't forget what you've done for me. I won't forget. Do you mind now if I send you away? I'd like to be alone."

Rob held the hands tight. "You brave little thing!" he blurted out. "I want to stay with you and comfort you and take care of you. Life has been cruel to you. I want to hold you in my arms and help you to forget. I——"

"Don't," she said. "Don't. Please go."

"You're not going to leave?" Rob asked in a different voice. "Aunt Tilda has it in her head that Hammond——"

"Please go," the girl repeated, and he went downstairs to wait.

By her command Hammond was shown to the balcony when he arrived, still early in the morning, and he found her, as Rob had done, staring out to sea. She was very pale, and her eyes had deep circles under them, which he saw as she turned to greet him.

"Did you go?" she asked. "Did you go to the Other Beach?"

"Yes, of course I went, after I had promised."

"Did you find him?" she continued. "Did you find Mr. Lorton?"

A direct lie was contrary to all his impulses, and he had planned against just such questions, and was prepared for neat evasion. "I told you he had gone home," he answered, "or to some snug hotel. Nobody would hang around on the beach, you know, a night like that."

"You mean, you did n't see him?" said Joy, studying his face with her tired eyes. "You did n't see anybody at all on the Other Beach?"

The whole thing reviewed itself swiftly in Will's mind. He had not seen Van Brink's face. A dead man is n't—well, he is n't anybody. He leaned forward and took her hand.

"No," he said; then hastened on: "How do you feel, little girl? Are you rested up?"

"I'm all right," said Joy, withdrawing the hand.

"I thought you'd be dressed for travelling," he continued. "It's short notice, but we can afford to be unconventional now and then. I knew you would see it the same way I do. Are your things packed up?"

"No," she answered. "No. I'm not going, Will. I never promised you. I never promised."

Foreseeing such protests, he had allowed a slight margin of time to combat them, so he schooled himself to patience.

"Now, Joy," he said, "listen while I tell you. We've known each other two years, and for eighteen months we've been engaged. Don't interrupt, please. Just listen. Practically engaged. I said I wanted you to marry me—dozens of times I've said it—and you never told me you would n't."

"Oh," cried Joy, but he went right on:

"That's one side of the matter, the—you might say, the love side. The other is the business side."

"Oh!" cried Joy, but he went right on:

"I must," persisted Hammond. "I have your welfare to look after. It is my natural right, because we're engaged, and, more than that, your—your mother gave me the duty with her very last breath. My business calls me to the other side of the world. It is unreasonable, worse than unreasonable, to expect me to leave you behind, unless you will go and stay at my father's house."

"No," said Joy.

"Then we must be married to-day. I've got to take you with me."

"I can't go to-day," she answered. "I can't—I can't go away from here to-day."

"Why not?"

"The reasons that mean everything to me are nothing at all to you," she said, words coming in a rush. "I hate to tell you my reasons, because you laugh at them, you talk them down before I finish speaking. I've changed, Will. I'm not a schoolgirl any longer, looking for fascinating romance. I'm a woman now."

"Then it's all the more necessary for you to have me look after you."

"Mrs. Dunn will look after me. I'm going to live with her in Tranquil Harbor, and maybe I can find out about my father."

The extra margin of time was more than spent, and he had need of hurry, so he took a desperate chance. "Joy," he said earnestly, "if you knew your father was dead; if I told you I could explain everything to you as soon as you like after to-day—would it relieve your mind?"

She looked at him with unbelieving eyes. "You *know*, Will?" she said then. "You have found out—who my father is?"

"I have found out. I meant to tell you later."

"You've *known*? You've let me go on wondering——"

"Not till—well, quite recently. I've just discovered the secret. But he's dead, Joy. There are no relatives—nobody. I will tell you every detail. Now, dearest, won't you get ready?"

Suddenly it came to Joy that she had nothing to fear from his persuasions. She was stronger, more determined, than Will himself. Her voice had gained in steadiness when she said, "I'm sorry for you, Will. I'm sorry for you."

"I don't know why," he answered. "I've done everything. I did n't forget a single item. My luggage went up by express direct to the steamer, so I don't have to return to Parkton. We'll take yours with us. I've sold the car, and the man is to get it from the Harbor garage after we're gone. We'll be married in a little church I know in town. Won't you hurry, Joy, and do your part?"

The girl's eyes filled with tears. In that moment she was saying the final farewell to all she had believed him to be, and it could not be done without causing pain. "No, Will, no," she said.

He stood at the railing, staring moodily out to where the clam-diggers dotted the shallow river, then he turned round.

"I'll go down for a while," he suggested, "and send Mrs. Dunn. You are nervous and tired, but if you will only trust me, afterwards we'll both be so glad. I'm going to make you happy, Joy. I've planned so many things to make you happy."

She might have let him go and later refused to see him, but that inherent passion for the truth, for perfect comprehension, forced from her a cry that held him.

"Don't come back," she said. "It won't do any good."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You must n't lose any more time here. I'm not—I'm not going with you."

"Why not?" he insisted.

"Because—oh, you *make* me say it—you make me say it—I don't care for you that way. I don't——"

Will's mouth twitched. "You don't love me," he finished for her. "Say it right out. Then it was n't because you wanted to wait and find your father. It was n't because the thing was sudden——"



"Please go," Joy interrupted. He was fumbling, however, at some papers in his pocket.

"You loved me when you wrote that!" he cried, putting a letter on the bamboo table, and piling others untidily on top. "You cared when you wrote me this one, and this, and this. I could keep them if I were mean enough; but I hope you'll read them and remember——"

He trailed off into an angry, mortified sob. His boyish face moved convulsively. Then he went close to her and said, "I can't—I can't take it in. You're only joking, Joy."

"I'm in earnest, Will," she said.

"We won't be married until you're ready. I won't ask it in such a hurry. But a year's not long. I'll be back in a year, and you'll be waiting for me. Take the ring, Joy, and I'll know we're engaged." He held it out on his shaking palm, but she did not move toward it.

"I'd rather not be engaged," she said. "I must feel free."

He was swept once more with fury. "Then, be free," he told her. "Be free, for anything I care." And, turning, he strode away.

For some time she sat motionless, trying to recall what he had said about her father. Her father was dead! Will knew who he was, and now Will was gone, and she had not learned the truth. As this thought pierced deeper into her consciousness, she rose with the idea of calling Tilda. It might not yet be too late.

The ocean breeze had just sprung up, and it blew cool and refreshing across her face, so that she breathed it gratefully. Then she noticed that the papers Hammond had left were being lifted and tossed about the balcony, and she stopped to gather them together, blushing at memory of what they were—the outpouring of a child's lonely heart. But protruding from among the familiar blue envelopes was a folded sheet she had never seen before. Idly she opened it and saw the title-page from "Lucile," with the inscription, "George Ingoldsby Lorton, from Del."

There was no longer any mystery for Joy. With the sight of that delicate writing, for which she had watched the post so often in her school-days, she understood. One after the other the links of the chain passed through her mind: Del's agitation at mention of the book "Lucile"; her shrinking from the finish of the search; Lorton's questions in the boat last night. She stood for a while staring at the initials G I L, then she ran into the house, and sped through the halls and passages to the steep staircase descending from the steerage at the back. Rob was waiting in the room below.

"Look!" she cried. "Look! He was my father!"

Van Brink saw the paper in her outstretched hand and understood what Hammond had done, but he only said, "Yes, I know. I waited until you were ready for me to tell you that."

"You *knew*?" she questioned. "You *knew*?"

"Since last night. I saw that paper in Mr. Lorton's house-boat."

"It's the front page of a book—'Lucile,'" said Joy, watching him with a desire to read his thoughts. "Did you see it in the book?"

"In the book," he answered.

"The edge is rough," she continued. "It has been torn out. Did you—was Dr. Hammond in *The Merry Clam*?"

"He came there looking for you. I left him inside the boat when I started to the beach. Joy, come down. Come down, and let me tell you."

But for once she wished no further particulars. She stood on the step above him for an uncertain moment, then she ran up and locked herself in the steerage bedroom, to battle with the truth she had discovered.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE GLIMMER GLASS IN JUNE

THE woods beyond the school-house hill had taken on their full June splendor. The path to the Glimmer Glass ran sandy brown between masses of flowering laurel, while the pond itself reflected smoothly the glossy leaves and their burden of pink blossom. A thrush was singing from some hiding-place; the call of a cat-bird gave a vague clue to her nest in the underbrush. Half a dozen fish-hawks, still fretting, flew back and forth from the river, bringing food that dripped salt water; and a flock of crows cawed themselves hoarse in derision of their discontented neighbors.

But the couple who walked the path were at the moment too much absorbed to note the decorations Nature had spread about them. Not that their minds were altogether on their conversation either, for, truth to tell, they were making talk with the subconscious purpose of postponing deeper and more exquisite thought.

"Then you don't believe in heredity," said Joy, glancing up at the figure beside her, and hastily carrying her gaze on to the radiant sky as she met Rob's look.

"Well, to a certain extent, of course," he answered. "It's always fascinated me, the subject. The law of inheriting likeness, physical, mental, moral, can't be denied. It's a truth, but not exact. It never can be counted on, and is apt to break down before the force of environment and training. Look at the weak kings whose forebears have been strong; the Louis they guillotined, for instance, because he did n't fight back and save himself. Plenty of his plain subjects showed more grit, and still in their turn they could n't pass courage on to their own children. What started you thinking about heredity?"

She hesitated. "My mother—my—my father," she answered pres-

ently. "You told me once, before we knew, that he was the weak man of his tribe, and sometimes I wonder if I'm like him——"

"You're the bravest girl in the world," Van Brink interrupted, as if there were no room for argument, and they moved on in silence for a time.

"The study of heredity's a hobby with me," Rob resumed, after a good five minutes had passed; but the words had an absent-minded ring, and it was plain that his fancy had soared far above them.

"Tilda's teaching me to cook;" it was Joy's turn to manufacture small talk. "She's so different in her own house. I just love her, even the cutting things she says. She showed me about meats, and gave a lecture on dressing ducks. You must n't shoot coots, for one thing——"

"I'll never bring in another coot," he interposed, and once more the conversation languished, until the girl said in a different tone:

"I love to think about my parents. Sometimes my head gets full of ideas, Rob, and longings. Will used to say they were morbid, and I ought not to give in to them, but they don't seem so to me. I can't explain——"

"Try," he begged.

"You know I had a solitary childhood, and I read so many books, and I was always on the lookout for something wonderful to happen. On Valentine's Day I expected heaps and heaps of gorgeous paper-lace hearts, and I did n't get them. At Christmas and on birthdays my hopes always went higher than the other girls, and I always got less to feed my notions on. I knew I was a sort of Cinderella, but I never doubted for a moment that the fairy godmother would come some day. Life was dreary, but I knew it could turn to gold."

Van Brink did not speak, and presently she took up the thread where she had left off. "Then I found out there was something strange about me, but it was n't beautiful and romantic like my dreams. I was so proud of being Dean Marston's daughter, and sometimes when Will insisted I should let it go on that way, I came so near consenting. He never saw how near I came! But the truth had spoiled it for me. If I was n't a Marston, all the pretending in the world could n't make it the same when I once knew. And now I like to think I'm the daughter of George Lorton. I'm not ashamed of what he was, only so sorry, so sorry for him."

"You're the bravest girl in the world," said Van Brink a second time, and with the words the ardor of his passion was set loose from reserve. "Joy," he went on eagerly, "I was a boy before, but when love touches a lad, he feels and sees, and he becomes a man. I'm a man since you came, and I can't go backward and be a boy again. I want you, dear."

A deeper rose than the salt air had painted blossomed on the cheek

where the dimple came and went, and at sight of it he took courage to continue: "It was good to be a boy, but, ah, it's better to be a man, because I can give my strength and love and all that I am and have to you. I used to laugh when they said I'd made a cure, for curing was play then, but now what powers I have are all for you. The world is a wonderful place, Joy, after love comes in."

She gave no reply in words, only lifting to him her blue eyes filled with a shy, mysterious surrender, at sight of which he began to tremble; and as they turned the bend in the path, coming out beside the shining Glimmer Glass, he put both arms about her and drew her to him.

"Joy," he exulted, "you're mine! You're mine forever!"

She rested against him, all the longings of her nature stilled, justified in her faith that life held delicious answer to its perpetual question; and at last she spoke without raising her head from his breast.

"It was n't because of my mother or my father that I came here and stayed," she whispered. "It was for this, Rob; it was for you."



## A FACE AT NOËL

BY EDITH M. THOMAS

**I**N my own Provence (how well I remember!),  
 When we all were sat at the Christmas feast,  
 Warm light on faces of greatest and least,  
 There would come a long cry outside the door,  
 Keen as the wind of the bleak December:  
 "Give to us poor from your Yule-log's store!"

In my own Provence (how well I remember!)  
 There was one who, smiling, would rise from her seat,  
 And, heaping a platter with bread and meat,  
 With figs and fugasso, would open the door,  
 While in blew the wind of the bleak December,  
 And snow came sifting along the floor.

In my own Provence (how well I remember!)  
 Those at the door I never once saw—  
 They were God's poor, to be held in awe!  
 But the angel-face my Mother wore,  
 Fronting the night and the bleak December,  
 Her face—how it grows on me more and more!

# THE FUNNY AMERICAN IN PARIS

*By Mrs. John Van Vorst*

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NO matter how far he may wander from home, the man with his pockets stuffed full of gold never feels himself to be absurd. Yet it seems a difficult thing, however great the fortune, to carry with one upon any journey a national prestige. The funny American who empties annually into the Rue de la Paix abundant money inspires by his very richness a sense of the ridiculous. No doubt he meets with cringing courtesy, but he becomes inevitably the clown of his own extravagance, of his nice contempt for driving a bargain.

"Why," we have heard a French salesman exclaim to a gorgeous American customer, "if Madame find the price too high, we will throw off ten dollars!"

And Madame, funny Madame, irritated at any one's supposing that she should let price deter her, replies with a curve of scorn on her rosy lips:

"Ten dollars? That may be a great deal to you. It is nothing to me."

Aside from such economic comicalities, there are travelling abroad certain Americans whose droll peculiarities are apparent to every one but themselves. The "wild-eyed" type, for example, who credulously follow the itinerary planned for them by the infallible Cook, blind, deaf, and dumb except as he inspires them to see, hear, or speak. We remember to have overheard a conversation between two of these funny Americans one morning in Florence. It was a beautiful day. They stood on the hotel balcony, gazing at the Arno as it rushed along between the broad quays toward the Ponte Vecchio.

"This is a great disappointment to me," one of the funny women declared. "I never thought Venice would look like this."

"Are you sure it is Venice?" the other funny woman ventured.

"It must be," came the stolid answer. "Cook's man told us we should be in Venice on the twenty-sixth, and this is the twenty-sixth."

This sort is always up earlier, and out sooner, and at it longer, than the ordinary sight-seer. They take more notes, miss nothing named in Baedeker, and when later you refer to some picture in a famous gallery they reply with a defiant look: "Well, if it's in that gallery, I've seen it!"

To be sure, everything depends on the point of view, and the source from which we take it. A whole party of funny Americans left Cairo in disgust. Egypt, they pouted, was no place for them. Why, the whole of Squeedunk had been built in twenty years, and here in Cairo the citizens had n't ever got up enough enterprise to put a new nose on that old Sphinx!

It is this clashing of preconceived ideas, this opposition of opinions, which makes any traveller conspicuous. If the American newly arrived in Paris appear funny, it is because he comes as a free-lance, from the land of liberty, into the most conservative of all social *milieux*.

At home, for example, in the matter of dress, he does what is comfortable. If the weather is hot, he puts on a straw hat, no matter what the date. His wife finds any season good enough for wearing her tan shoes, and she leaves aside her coat or wrap when she gets ready. These insignificant details in the mere matter of toilet sound the first note of inharmony when Paris is reached—let us say, during the month of May. The rule for the appearance of the straw hat in the French capital is as strict as that for its disappearance in New York. No self-respecting French citizen will wear anything but felt or silk hats until after the Grand Prix is run.

Another custom dictated by the French æsthetic taste debars tan shoes with dark street clothes. The shoes and the hat in a woman's get-up must be darker than the gown itself. Moreover, no lady, however torrid may be the temperature, ever goes out in Paris without a scarf, a boa, a jacket, or an outside wrap of some sort.

Thus, the "funny" American couple are easily distinguishable. The man's straw hat glints and glistens all the way down the Champs Elysées, from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde; his wife's light shoes, her dark blue gown, her shoulders guiltless of wrap or other outer covering, rouse as they pass a ripple of amusement.

If, perchance, Mrs. Funny American wear glasses, then the mirth is uncontrollable.

But, you protest, if you have poor eyes, you *must* wear eye-glasses.

Not so, says the French *femme du monde*. Women do not need to see anything so imperatively as to perch upon their noses that disfiguring mechanism. We recall in this connection the indulgent contempt of a certain Paris milliner for the wife of an American Ambassador, who was short-sighted.

"*Que voulez-vous?*" the milliner shrugged. "It makes no



difference if *Madame l'Ambassadrice* put on a hundred-dollar hat or a thousand-dollar hat. So long as she wear those eye-glasses, she will look like nothing."

If a woman has to work or to study assiduously, that is another question, so the French authorities say; but so long as she chooses society as her aim in life, she is an *objet de luxe*, her duty is to look well, and her rights do not include that of—for any reason whatsoever—disfiguring herself.

Even Bridge, that absorbing attraction, cannot tempt the near-sighted French woman of the world. She sits about and looks on at the game, but as she could not hold her lorgnette and her cards, she can look on only.

The question of mere eye-glasses may seem trivial, ridiculous, but it has its reasonable explanation from the Latin point of view. The whole purport of the French girl's education is to efface so far as possible all individuality, to make her the small but submissive part of a great, harmonious whole. What egoism, therefore, she would display by inflicting upon her neighbors a constant spectacle of ugliness, merely so that she personally might see better what was going on!

French society is like a charming moving-picture in a narrow perfect frame. No one must transgress the prescribed gestures, lest perchance he overreach the limits of the gilded *cadre*.

Among the national prejudices which come out strongly in the funny American abroad, there is the deep-rooted, ingrained aversion to tips. Now, for the Frenchman, the tip is the sporting part of the commercial proposition. It is this element of chance which saves his mere wage-earning from the deadly monotony that induces suicide. To know a year in advance just how much one can make, that indeed is unimaginative; but to play the little game of uncertainty adds a spice to life, it gives the humblest porter an opportunity to exercise his personal magnetism, his ingenuity, his ability for simple nagging. We remember after a long voyage on the French line, during which the service had been conspicuous by its absence, a young boy came knocking at the cabin-door as we were approaching Havre.

"May I have my *pourboire*, please?" he asked.

"To be sure! But what have you done?"

Smiling, he explained:

"It was I who went and got the stewardess when you rang for her."

To meet this cavalier spirit with rebellion, makes the honest American funny enough. In little matters of this sort he should, as Voltaire said, "glide lightly, never insist."

Another thing which makes the American seem "funny" in Paris is his sudden transportation from a land of tumultuous agitation to one of old-fashioned formalities. He is accustomed to jumping on a

crowded street-car in full motion. In Paris he must wait until the car stops at an especial spot, and then stand in line and listen for his number to be called. His New York life is suspended on the telephone. In France, the government has, by complete monopoly, put up the cost and put down the speed of telephonic communication, so that the intercourse by wire means an all-day affair. In the recent trial of speed made in sending from one end of Paris to the other a message by cab, by telephone, and by a boy on a bicycle, it was observed that the boy on the bicycle reached his destination first.

Again, the brusque operation known in the United States as a business call exacts that the American show strict regard for the fundamental principle that time is money. He comes at once to the point of his visit. In France, this would be considered bad form. Business conversations must begin with remarks about the weather, inquiries about the health of families and individuals—even mothers-in-law—comments upon births, marriages, deaths, baptisms, operations and possible operations. After a while—tentatively, of course—the vulgar notion of personal interest may be broached.

This dread of treading on toes goes so far that no governmental department in France makes use of a typewriter. All official communications are written out and copied by hand. No doubt this keeps an army of functionaries occupied, but it implies an archaic point of view which strikes horror to the true American's time-saving heart.

No wonder, then, when one thinks of the old-world population, waiting in line for street-cars, waiting in line to telephone, waiting in line to get news of a partner's mother-in-law, waiting in line to read their morning correspondence in long-hand, waiting, waiting, always waiting, somewhere, somehow—no wonder that the American, his coat-tails flying as he whisks around, appears fairly funny.

Perhaps the oriental philosophers would find in the French patient waiting a greater chance for spiritual contemplation than in our "do it now" system. And perhaps it is less the doing and more the thinking which makes any act either good or bad. But if we *will* travel, and such seems our modern American determination, we should be less funny if we tried, rather than to inflict our own point of view on others, to adopt that of the foreigners—merely to see, *en passant*, what there may be in its behalf.

The Arab says to the European:

"We can never be friends."

"Why?" the European asks.

"Because," the Arab gravely responds, "you treat your women with too much consideration, because you embrace your dogs, and because you cannot say even good-morning without smiling."

The Frenchman has but one idea, and that is quiet, peace, retire-

ment. All the country places in France are surrounded by high walls, which insure intimacy to the inmates. The railway trains are divided into little compartments where families can travel alone. The most fashionable restaurants in Paris are small, silent, with carpets on the floors, and, above all, no music.

"Oh," groaned a certain Count C., who returned bewildered from New York, "I could not eat even a boiled egg in the United States without having a full orchestra strike up some rag-time melody."

And the American, the true American, after a week in Paris, summed up his observations thus:

"They've got fine streets here, elegant residences, first-class restaurants. But what I miss are the crowds. You don't ever see a real jolly, noisy crowd as you do in New York."

Necessarily, the funny American finds Paris dull.

"I want to take a long car ride," one of them remarked, "and I don't know where to go."

"Have you tried driving in the little *fiacres*? The cabs are so reasonable you can take one all over the Bois de Boulogne for a few francs."

This suggestion met with crushing scorn.

"Cabs!" the man retorted. "Why, I've taken cabs until I feel as though I were married to a cab and could never get rid of it."

In this same spirit we heard two American girls talking together.

"What shall we do this afternoon?"

"Let's go to the Louvre."

"Oh, no; I've been there already, and it's not the sort of place you care to go to more than once."

Another hurried funny couple left Paris because there were not enough "B. C. buildings." They had come over to see something really old. Their courier could get no attention from them for the monuments of three or four hundred years ago. They only shook their heads sadly and repeated:

"It's not B. C."

This is the funny American's general attitude. He wants the oldest, the newest, the biggest, the queerest, the best, the worst, the blackest, the whitest. No intervening qualities appeal to his appetite for extremes. It is not the rare *bibelot* itself he enjoys; it is possessing the *bibelot* that warms his soul. It is not the good dinner he cares about; it is being able to pay for the best, which he relishes.

At the Café Anglais, that famous old Paris restaurant, we one day noticed two funny Americans lunching. The *maitre d'hôtel* and the *garçon* were both in attendance upon the little couple, evidently on their honeymoon, and with the savor of hayseed in their awkward, provincial manners. They were shy, but determined. The husband

held the wine-card in his hand, and, having slipped his finger down the long list of Bordeaux and Burgundies which make the wine-cellars of the Café Anglais renowned, he brought it to a halt at the bottom of the page.

"Ça," he said looking unflinchingly at the waiter. "*Donnez ça.*"

"Ça" was a bottle of Bordeaux: price two hundred francs, or forty dollars. There was nothing more expensive on the list, or the funny American would have ordered it.

Unaccustomed to drinking wine, the bridal couple gulped and swallowed wryly. But the sacrifice was worth it. They had drunk the most costly bottle of wine that could be bought in Paris.

A mood which the funny American frequently shows is the "you can't fool me" sort. Perhaps he cannot speak the language, but he is judge enough of human nature not to be taken in by a common French waiter, for example. He snaps his eyes and looks ready to hit out at any one who approaches. A certain member of this amiable tribe, having made out his menu for lunch at a quiet little restaurant, was visited by the head-waiter, who obsequiously proposed:

"*Monsieur voudrait des hors d'œuvres?*"

"Ordered?" cried the funny American. "What do you think I've been doing?"

There also exists the gasping, happy, feminine funny American. She is mad about it all, and finds no words to say how glad she is that she could come.

"It's all so quaint!" she twitters. "Why, even the garbage in Paris is artistic!"

And when you tell her, feeling sure she adores etchings, that there are some Whistlers at Durand Ruel's, she gasps:

"Oh, how sweet! Do they really whistle?"

Finally, on the homeward-bound steamer, you meet the tired funny American couple who have "done" the Holy Land, "done" Egypt, "done" Europe, all in a frantic rush. Once on the ship, they get out their Baedekers.

"We've been in a perfect whirl," they explain. "Now we're going to read up and find out what we've seen."

A keen sense of the ridiculous no doubt makes a nation witty; but when wit can be found even in the street gutter, and when real character has become scarce, one can't help making a choice. If the French be celebrated for their *esprit*, the Americans surely shine by their force of will. They may not have the willing adaptability which makes them appear, as soon as they reach Paris, like old Parisians; but they always keep an equilibrium, a self-respect, a home ideal which is extremely dignified. At times the funny American even conceals a tragic side. Daisy Miller, her wiry little brother, her bilious

mother, make us laugh when we begin to read about their escapades in Europe. But as we put down this perfect story of Henry James, our eyes are full of tears, and we fall to wondering. Yearly, just such tragedies, and others more brutal, are enacted over in the Latin Quarter. All the dramas that may ensue from too great freedom and too little material aid, from the whims of love, the pangs of dire poverty, succeed one another in that part of Paris between the Luxembourg and the Boulevard Montparnasse, where the American students take up their abode, and too often fall victims to the exhausting conflict between wild ambition and restricted talent.

The great point, whether it be in business, in love, in journeying abroad, or in staying at home, is to be true to oneself. Travellers must be content, they must adapt themselves to outward conditions, but if they want to be really happy they must carry within their own hearts an ideal, abstract, perfect. With this as a measure of comparison, no matter what the circumstances, they will never be wholly funny, they will never be wholly tragic. It is the shutting of one's eyes to the inward light that makes one's acts ridiculous, irrevocable.



## YE SAGES THREE!

BY SUSIE M. BEST

“**Y**E Sages Three a-gazing  
Upon the heavens afar,  
Why seem ye so illumined?”  
(“*Behold! we see His Star!*”)

“Ye Sages Three a-faring  
Across the desert wild,  
Why do ye dare such dangers?”  
(“*We go to seek the Child!*”)

“Ye Sages Three a-laden  
With treasures manifold,  
What Lord is worth this largess?”  
(“*The King by seers foretold!*”)

“Ye Sages Three a-kneeling  
Before the cattle-stall,  
Who's this so light-enhaloed?”  
(“*The Saviour of us all!*”)

# A CHRISTMAS BLESSING

*By Harriet Prescott Spofford*

"I T ain't exac'ly the Chris'mus weather I like to see. But it's good Chris'mus weather, for it bids fair for plenty o' snow, and I ain't no opinion of green Chris'muses. I must hurry an' git that ice in 'fore it's covered." Mr. Dow was scanning the vane on the barn and studying the western sky as he spoke.

"Don't you think you 'd better not be goin' to-day, Father?" said his wife, looking out herself, dish-cloth and dish in hand, at the great bank of cloud rolling in from the east, with little spits and flurries of snow.

"Now, don't ye go more 'n half-way to meet trouble, Mother," said the great good-natured giant, getting into his long boots. "I gotter resk it."

"I don't have to go half-way," said Mrs. Dow, "for there 't is. That s'utheast gale of rain last week did consider'ble meltin', an' now there's a no'theaster ready to bust right onto us, ef I know any signs of wind an' sky, an' you 'll lose yer way in a snowstorm that 'll blind ye on that great lake."

"But 't ain't here yit. And ef we don't harvest this run of ice before there comes another thaw, like as not there won't be another deep freeze the winter long. The men are all right; and I gotter du it, Mother!"

"W'ether ye lose yer hosses, an' yer life, too, or not?"

"Wal, Mother, ef I lose my life, I won't need the hosses"—his eyes twinkling. "There's Mis' Cap'n Merritt. She's some size to her. Now, what in mighty do ye s'pose she wants? Come to fuss about that bill, and I no time to spare. Come right in, Mis' Merritt. I'm in a consider'ble of a hurry—set down, set down!"—hospitality getting the better of hurry.

"I've come to see about my bill," said the visitor, as she loosened her tippet.

"Sho' now!"

"I never paid so much for ice in my life. Seems to me there must be some mistake. I can't think the price of ice has gone up at this rate while I've been going to sea with my husband. Cap'n Merritt says——"

"Cap'n Merritt ain't in the ice-business, marm."

"My bill did n't use to be half as large summers when we've been lying off and I had my ice of Mr. Barnes."



"Mr. Barnes failed, did n't he?"

"Yes, but——"

"Now, Mis' Merritt, ef ye want to larn the ice-business, I'll larn ye. Wages has riz in the years ye've ben sailin' about the seas. Barnes hired his men for nine dollars a week. I pay one o' my men eighteen in summer an' fourteen in winter. See? My drivers get fifteen in summer—it's tetchy work—an' twelve in winter——"

"Dear me, Mr. Dow! What is it to me how much you pay your men?"

"It's part of the price of yer ice to ye. Ye're larnin' the ice-business, Mis' Merritt," said the giant, towering over her, although she was a large and strong woman herself. "Wal, I hev to hev hosses, you know. Barnes paid a couple o' hunderd fer his heavy young hosses. I pay seven hunderd a pair. See? Hosses eats hay; an' hay thet useter be nex' ter nothin', eight or ten dollars a ton, mebbe, now costs me twenty-five sutlin'. Hosses eats oats. Barnes never paid more'n forty cents a bushel, sometimes on'y a little more'n half that. I ushully pay seventy-five cents. All the feed same way. I hev ter keep my ice-houses snug. Barnes paid perhaps twelve dollars a thousand, last week I paid thirty-five fer pine an' twenty-eight fer spruce. Shingles has doubled, too. Then there's blacksmith work, that useter be twenty-five cents an hour, now's forty. Paint fer the wagons, ile—tut, tut, I guess my expense fer one week's double Barnes's fer a month an' more. Now, them's the reasons ice hes gone up——"

"But, Mr. Dow, the ice does n't cost you anything. God makes the ice; and it seems to me you are just taking advantage of a gift of nature——"

"God does make the ice, Mis' Merritt; but does He cut it, an' store it, an' keep half a dozen hosses an' as many men t' handle it? There ain't much graft in this game, marm. Now you satisfied? But ef ye don't feel able to pay your bill, ye can let it go at that. 'T won't make me nor break me. But there't is. And I ain't got no more time to waste on it, anyways"—tugging into his reefer. "I gotter git out an' cut ice. You stay an' keep Mis' Dow company"—relenting from his severity. "She's got some pumpkin pie'll make ye think ye're a-eatin' of strorb'ries."

"Lor', Mr. Dow, you'd wile a bird from off a bough!"

"Lunch-pails ready, Mother?"

"They're in the shed, Joshuay. I guess the coffee's wrapt so't it'll keep het."

"Sho' now! We'll have a fire out on the ice an' heat thin's up. Wal, good-by, Sary. Take keer ye don't ketch col'——"

"It's early dark, ye know, Father," she said anxiously.

"Ushully is this season, Chris'mus coming. Shortest days o' the

year last week. You go down to the store an' git w'at ye want fer Chris'mus fer the childern. I got suthin' fer *you*——"

"Now, Father!"

"S'pose ye keep Chris'mus, Mis' Merritt?"

"If there's anything left after I pay my ice-bill," she replied, laughing.

"Wal, I wish ye a merry Chris'mus, anyways. And ef I harvest a good lot to-day yer ice-bill probbly won't be so big nex' year, marm. So long, Mother." And, stooping his high head under the doorway, he was gone; and they heard his great gay voice calling to the men and horses.

Mrs. Dow was not too friendly in her heart with the woman who dared dispute her husband's bill. As if Joshuay war n't the soul of honesty and generosity! But the spirit of hospitality was the inheritance of her race, and she set a piece of her pumpkin pie before the guest, together with a bright knife. Not to be outdone, Mrs. Merritt, who had dropped in her voyagings many an old habit, ate it with the knife, using the tip daintily, till she could take it in her fingers and become as savage as anybody, as she said to herself.

It was a singular thing that this process made her feel more familiar with Mrs. Dow than before, and she sat a long time chatting pleasantly while Mrs. Dow went on with her work, filling her mince-pies, lifting the plates and paring the edges, and testing the oven, all in the quiet way she had that hardly let you know work was being done. "Well," said Mrs. Merritt, wiping her lips, "I've eaten worse things than that."

"You have," said Mrs. Dow, accepting the praise in the spirit in which it was given.

"And got fond of 'em, too. There's bird's-nest soup—first time 't was set before me out to China, I had to take my spoon in both hands, it went against me so. And broiled rattlesnake——"

"Sakes alive!"

"Yes, something between pork-chop and brook-trout. Very tasty, after you get over the idea of it. When you put in at desert islands you don't know what it is you're coming to, long pig or——"

"Long—— You mean ter say you et it?" Mrs. Dow in the moment thought of destroying that knife and plate.

"I did n't just say that," said Mrs. Dow. "But I might have. Sea-cap'ns' wives have to take things as they find them."

"Ever shipwrecked?" asked Mrs. Dow, drawing a pie from the oven.

"Worse than that! One time I leaned over the side, nobody round, and the ship gave a lurch and over I went, and if my gown had n't caught I'd 'a' gone, and nobody the wiser. Sharks following."

"Dear, dear!"

"But I've been wrecked fast enough—swung over the side in a chair

and hauled ashore on a rope, dropped into a boat when it rose on a wave, afloat four days on a raft——”

“Mercy me!” cried Mrs. Dow. “An’ Cap’n Merritt sailin’?”

“The Company put him off on ships they expected to go to pieces for the insurance. And if he’d made a row, they’d ’a’ hindered his getting anything else. The way they were surprised once when he walked in the office alive and well—they thought ’t was his ghost. He said I should n’t sail on any more such contraptions, and he took on so that bimeby he got a new ship just off the stocks. Yes, there ain’t much I ain’t been through, honest injun. Once I sailed with Cap’n into Frisco on a barque loaded with gunpowder and she afire, and once in the *Mary Ann*, loaded with kerosene barrels, and she afire——”

“W’y, Mis’ Merritt, you was a reg’lar Jonah!”

“Looks so. Once ’t was loaded with ice and afire——”

“Ice!”

“Spontaneous combustion, wet sawdust——”

“Oh, my soul alive!”

“Risk’y work. Cap’n Merritt himself said either him or me was a Jonah, and I’d better stay home. And I said, then he’d stay, too. And so we did. But I miss it. Never knew when we went sailing out of harbor, blue sky and sunshine and favoring winds, how it was going to turn out. I learned to navigate, and when he was sick a spell I made the port all right. No, there ain’t a thing about sea-going I ain’t acquainted with. There ain’t a sailor’s knot I can’t tie. I sailed with Cap’n ’most twenty years, and saw the round world. I ain’t ever been so happy, since we’ve stayed ashore, as when I’m sailing a boat out on the lake here in summer-time, or rowing in at evening, sunset over me and sunset under, and feeling as if I was in the heart of a great bubble that might go soaring up in the air any minute.”

“Yes, I seen ye sailin’. I sh’d be skeered.”

“Never was scared in my life,” said the big, radiant woman, fired with remembrance of the dangers she had passed. Meanwhile she was tasting one of Mrs. Dow’s mince-turnovers with approval. “Never was any great of a cook myself,” she said. “But I can make plum-duff and boil old hoss tender——”

“Old hoss!” exclaimed Mrs. Dow, with horror, as she wiped off her bread-board.

“Corned beef, you know, that’s gone two or three times round the globe, salt as the seven seas.”

“Oh, oh! But my goodness me!” exclaimed Mrs. Dow, as she passed the window, putting away her tools. “See how the weather’s changed! I told him ’t would, likely as not. But I did n’t think ’t would come so soon. Land above us, it’s a horricane! Jes’ see the snow drive! I never see the beat. They won’t know t’ other fum which

'way out there on the lake. It's wuss'n fog. He'd better of let that ice go!"

"It'll be covered with drift, any way. But I don't believe it'll be like this long. If I was out off Hatteras, I'd know what to expect, but, being ashore, I'm all at sea. I'd ought to got home an hour ago, instead of loitering here, swapping yarns——"

"You can't git home in this flurry. You'll hev ter wait till it blows over."

"Guess I'll have to wait some time, then. The wind's gathering, dead no'theast by north. These great gales travelling up the coast seem to get madder and madder, as if they had to fight their way. But they ain't nothing to a typhoon down in the Indian Ocean. Though I must say this has come on about as sudden. It don't look to me as if it was going to be a three-decker. Maybe it's meeting a nor'wester and going to blow out to sea. We must be about in the centre of it, any way."

"I'm thinkin' Joshuay's about in the centre of it," said Mrs. Dow, making a tour of all the windows. "He won't stay in it long. But how the childern are goin' ter git home fum schule passes me."

The door burst open as she spoke, and Tommy, white with snow, rushed in. "Mother, Mother!" he cried, as she put out all her force against the door in her effort to close it. "The ice has broke loose fum shore! And there's Father and the men and the hosses——"

Mrs. Dow was getting into the rubber boots in which she hung out the clothes on snowy days, and tying a shawl round her head and shoulders, almost while Tommy was speaking; and Mrs. Merritt was hurrying off her feathered bonnet and wrapping her head round and round with the kitchen roller, and worrying into a pea-jacket that hung in the entry. "I do' know w'at we're goin' for," said Mrs. Dow, when they had succeeded in pulling to the door behind them, "but I can't stay to hum 'ith Joshuay——" and the wind tore away the rest of the words. What Mrs. Merritt replied the wind forced down her throat again. But she had an idea that she knew what she was about. She had caught up and lighted the lantern, and now made directly for the shore and the boat-house there, Mrs. Dow following, and Tommy tightening his muffler and breasting the gale behind them. They were strong women, and, as his mother said, "Tommy warn't no slouch." They ran the boat down the ways and over the broken ice and clambered in, Tommy holding the lantern in the bows, while his mother and Mrs. Merritt shipped the oars. The storm screamed round them; the snow half-blinded them; everywhere, on all sides, they heard the cracking and splitting and splintering and grinding of the broken ice, and the great roar of the huge sheet that was sweeping down the lake.

Their boat and oars, the tiny compass on Mrs. Merritt's chain, their breathless effort, all seemed puny and futile—but what else was there

to do? "Joshuay! Joshuay!" shrieked Mrs. Dow. "Hold on! We're comin'!" but she could not hear the sound of her own voice. The waters of the lake already tossed like the sea. "Don't you be scared," Mrs. Merritt cried close to her ear. "We'll keep her head on, with your oar, and make it yet."

Out there on the roaring floe, Mr. Dow and his men were huddled together, waiting for fate. They had been too busy, and too warm at their work, too used to weather, to be troubled by the first fury of the blast that presently gathered and grew till it pushed against them like a mighty moving wall. And then suddenly they heard above the roar great exploding reports like the bursting of cannon, that seemed to come from around, above, below, and they saw with terror that the ice had been some time parted from the shore and with the swiftness of the storm was rushing down the lake that already was ruffled in dark waves. It was impossible to cross that swiftly widening stretch of water. Look which way they would, it was impossible to make the shore. The snow was soon so blinding they could not even see the shore. Mr. Dow got out the oats and gave their feed to the horses, to keep them quiet and make some shelter for the men against the wind. He remembered the great bluffs at the end of the lake, and he knew that the ice must crash up against them and pile in huge blocks that would inevitably crush them all. The last resort would be to plunge into the black water whose waves were swelling so high that perhaps no swimmer could surmount them. Either way was death. They must wait where they were, in hope that the sudden strength of the gale might subside, the ice cease its onward course, and rescue come to them. Possibly they might drift nearer to one side and anchor on the ground ice there. His men had no wives or children to think of. But he—the boy and girl—Sarah would manage somehow—why had n't he minded her wise caution in the morning? Never to see her pleasant face again, her kind smile, never to hear her voice again! He had built such hopes on Tommy—and little Sally's arms about his neck. "Wife, Wife!" he cried, as if for her comfort, his face hidden in his arms as he stood, while he tasted the bitterness of death, and the storm roared on and the ice still swept to the south, rocking and bending and breaking.

It seemed as if day and night and day again had gone and come again in that long hour, when suddenly George Turner cried, "What's that? What's that?" and they saw a spark making a halo of dim light all around it, and the next moment a rope swooped through the air and fell at their feet, as if brought by the wind, and in a momentary lull they heard Mrs. Merritt's voice as she cried with all the might of lungs and throat and seamanship, "Catch hold, there. Some of you climb in and row us ashore and come back for the rest. We've shipped some water, but she rides well."

The rest was easy, comparatively speaking, although it took time and the last of their strength to make the trips. When George Turner and Joe Hardy returned on the last one for Mr. Dow, he had one of the horses in tow, Dolly, the brightest of the string; and, although she backed and pawed and pulled, the rope drew steadily, and at last she ventured and plunged in, and in spite of the hard swimming she scrambled up the icy shore just after the boat, and, to every one's amazement, the other five followed.

There was a busy hour in the big barn, rubbing down the horses and giving them hot mash and bountiful bedding, while, one at a time, the men changed their own clothes, before Mr. Dow got into the house to be rubbed down in his turn.

"Cap'n Merritt 'll be guessing about me," said Mrs. Merritt, when at last Mr. Dow, ruddy as a winter apple, came out of the bedroom, where Tommy had been tucked away, and partook of the bowl of hot sangaree and baked apple that she had ready for him and his wife. Her own clothes were steaming behind the stove, and she wore some garments of Mrs. Dow's, whose deficiencies in the matter of coming together were corrected by a bed-spread worn as a squaw wears her blanket.

"I guess we 'll keep him guessin'," said Mr. Dow. "You ain't goin' home in no sech weather. You've braved it jest enough. Ye're goin' ter stay here an' keep Chris'mus 'ith us, and I'll go for him bimeby, soon's I'm rested up. We've got good reason to keep Chris'mus this year, thanks to you an' Mis' Dow an' the Lord above. Think He puts thoughts into our minds an' stren'th into our hearts? He was pretty busy over you and Mother, then, this mornin'. You put Tommy to bed, Sary? He won't stay. Sally took her luncheon with her? Teacher's takin' keer. These sudding storms ain't the old three-day kind. Time it's time for her to come home, I would n't wonder ef 't was consider'ble ca'm. I'll go fer her, anyways. Wal"—standing up and stretching his long arms—"we've lost that run of ice, Mother, but——"

"Lor', Father, there's all Janooary and Febrooary——"

"An' Chris'mus comin'. Say, Mother, why should n't we have one o' them Chris'mus pies w'ile we're settin'."

"Becos it ain't Chris'mus yit."

"'T was cold as Chris'mus out on that ice."

"So 't was, Father, so 't was. You shall have yer pie."

"Wait a minute! Hallo, who's there?"—as the door flew open with a great puffing and blowing and stamping of snow.

"Cap'n Merritt!" cried that worthy man's wife. "Well, I'd have said 't was Santy Claus himself! Where in the world did you come from?"

"Jes' snowed down," said Mrs. Dow. "Glad to see ye, sir."

"Well," said Captain Merritt, "I thought I'd lay by and give the



young ones a tow home from school when it came on to fetch the sails out of the bolt-ropes. So I've made it easy for quite a parcel of 'em. And here's the last." And little Sally, rosy and laughing, slid from under his vast coat. "And then I heard of my wife's goings-on and I came for her. You ready to go home, Mis' Cap'n Merritt?"

"Well, no, I can't say I am till my clothes dry."

"She ain't goin' home a step to-night!" cried Mr. Dow. "Nor you neyther, Cap'n. We'll hev a fire in the spare room, an' ye'll both on ye stay here. I do' know's there's anythin' more enj'yable than good company and a good fire and a good supper, when there's a great storm roarin' on outside inter the dark. Makes ye feel speshully keered fer. Mis' Cap'n Merritt's saved my life and my men's and my hosses'; an' my house is her'n as long's she'll stay in it. Mis' Merritt, you git another refrigerator, big as the side o' the house, an' you shell hev it filled every day o' the year, an' my right hand'll freeze to the marrer ef you ever see sight of a bill! Come, Wife, let's be stirrin' roun'. I'll call George Turner in to help. It's Chris'mus Eve, an' we'll hev a a Chris'mus supper and a Chris'mus breakfus' to beat anythin' King George upon his throne ever et. An' we'll take it as a Chris'mus blessing that, thanks to God and you and Mis' Cap'n Merritt, we're alive to eat it!"



## COST

By CAROLINE GILTINAN

**L**ITTLE Boy in the manger,  
 Who saved a world from woe,  
 Did You lie there freezing?  
 She could not have it so!  
 Snuggled against her throbbing breast,  
 Wrapped in her own soft hair,  
 Warmth You shared with ev'ry breath,  
 Happy and peaceful there.

But when You left her shielding arms,  
 Saviour of fallen men,  
 Bitter cold You did endure—  
 She could not warm You then!  
 She could not warm Your Body;  
 She could not bear Your Rod;  
 She bore, instead, a bleeding heart.  
 Oh, were we worth it, God?

# THE WOMAN AT THE DOOR

*By John Nicholas Beffel*

MY interest in finding a "good fellow" was neither scientific nor literary. It was personal. I had been called one. Long ago it was my ambition to be called one. I made good—so far as getting the title. Inside, I knew I was n't guilty. There were two or three others on the inside.

So when another was spoken of as a "good fellow," I would turn to look him over with the critical eye of one who has passed up through that department. Moreover, it would occur to me to wonder if he were a counterfeit or just the common fool-variety.

In fact, I was sceptical as to the real fabric. There was a time when I believed in such a thing as a "typical" New Yorker, a "typical" club-woman and commuter—but that is past. Man is so much his momentary idea of himself that you can't nail him to a dimension. He won't stay typed nor bought.

The Christmas-tide in which these things were more or less uppermost in mind was rather a lonely and miserable affair for me. One pays with such periods for early aspiration to good fellowship. This is no wail at all; it is merely set down to show that I was in a proper frame of mind to meet Jim Flowers. He was a trifle older than I—and good to look at. He told a story in a way to bring out unique angles of humor, betraying a finer than common appreciation of the human comedy. He could give advice and disdain to take it for his own. He could drink without letting it stir up ooze and mire. He had hopes of his own, but he did n't rope and stake you to them. He could listen to yours—a little. He had read a bit, and travelled into some places off the beaten track. . . . The point is, I had a real evening—that first with Jim Flowers, and not too many cornucopias of Pilsener, either. It made me feel that there was something worth while in Being Here, after all. . . . And I liked Jim's hand, as we parted.

All the next day I thought it over—the little touches of the night before. This is n't fair to any man, for such thinking makes you expect too much, but it helped to pass the day. It was the Twenty-fourth—and many things I wanted to do were not being done that year. New York is n't Christmas atmosphere. Sometimes it's hard to believe that they've heard of it there.

The main issue of the hour was Jim Flowers. After I had ceased to look, the "good fellow" in real flesh and blood had come. I could no longer gratify myself with the thought that the alleged others were, even as I, brass under a brighter wash. . . . Jim Flowers seemed to stick. He was natural, full-breadth-and-length a good fellow. The white-aproned factotum had murmured the fact in other words when Jim was out of hearing in a telephone-booth. Friends had come in and out, saying, "Hello, Jim," with lingering affection. He was wise and kind, and, though he seemed to have money, was congenially, congenitally poor, as really sweet natures must always be. . . . And so I looked forward to meeting Jim again that night at Richter's.

This was a little Sixth Avenue back-room with an ideal or two remaining. Heaven knows New York back-rooms are desolate enough of such, to make it worth mentioning. It would have been called a "tap-house" in Stoke-under-Ham—and other names in Seneca, Illinois. It was cozy and polished, aged, or rather weathered. The decrepit, scar-faced Mezzoramanian who kept it could make anything—even a cup of coffee—and he had the courtesy of an angel. The virtue of his factotum—and there was but one—was service and unobtrusiveness. Artists gave the place distinction and a precarious credit.

I reached Richter's a little before Jim on the Eve. He was "Jim" in my thoughts—though I had met him only the once. I inquired of the man. . . . "No, Mr. Flowers has n't been in yet—but he will," he said. An habitu  at my right, nicely mellowed with holiday spirit, volunteered (to the irritation of the dispenser): "Jim Flowers? . . . Biggest-hearted chap this side of Tioga, North Dakota."

This was n't a bit like New York, but I liked Richter's just because it was n't—and so I did n't freeze up in the presence of the stranger, though I may have lost caste a trifle.

"There never was a bellerin' little news-kid stuck with an armful of extras—that fell under Jim Flowers' eye without getting a tidy piece of change; nor he never made a 'bo recite his life-story and pedigree before lettin' go the price of a meal—"

"'Sh," warned the factotum, and then I had Jim's hand again.

"You and I will sit down for a chat? . . . Like last night? . . . Good! . . . Only, there 's a little formality first." Jim leaned across the walnut and whispered respectfully, "This is Tom-and-Jerry night—and I can't let that go by. . . . Just mix them up for the gentlemen present with Richter's Dominica rum—and then come to me—"

Jim now included me with his eyes, and added to the man—"at our little table!"

The mild, decent, warming manner of him restored and sanctioned all my mental ventures during the day. I must have been very lonely, for the traffic was blocked in my throat for a second. . . . Poor young

mavericks loose in New York—how little comes to them of the real bread of life!

It was a bitter cold night. Gusts of hard, dry snow stormed up and down the ringing pavement. The crash of the "L" was momentary, like a sharper growl of the gale. The purple veins of the customers were upstanding—the short breath and the teary eye—and all that goes with back-rooms. . . . Jim Flowers was telling an appealing story:

" . . . just such a night as this. We had all gathered in Mike Garrity's place. That mountain-town was a sort of runaway for high winds—'way up in the Cascade lead-mines. I 'member there was a couple of tables of seven-up. Garrity did n't have anything in but Irish whiskey, which, as you know, is all right for a sprint—but a punisher on a four-mile course—like a long winter evening. Suddenly the man opposite jerked up, and asked the crowd if *they* heard it. We had n't heard anything, and presently went on playing. Then it came to me—a long wailing cry. I could n't see the cards for a minute. It caught me here—"

Jim Flowers stopped, facing the side door. I followed his eyes. A little woman was standing there—just as you would have made her up if you were putting on a show and wanted to harrow to tears. She had the shawl and pallor—that angular look about the shoulders which is so terrible with a young face. And there was no drink nor drug on her face! The icy wind would have lined up any havoc like that. Just pitifulness. I remember thinking that here was probably a professional beggar, but she was good enough to get me. New York makes one sceptical, but, any way, I had my hand on a silver dollar as she came forward to where we sat—in a queer, hesitating way, as if she did n't like to disturb our talk.

"Gentlemen—" she began in a low, tired voice.

I was taking my hand from my pocket when Jim Flowers caught my arm. His face and gesture said, "I 'll really be hurt, old man, if you don't leave this whole thing to me!"

He led her graciously to the door. I did n't turn, but only a moment passed before the door opened to let the woman go.

I did n't feel like saying anything for a minute when Jim came back, looking a little ashamed for having been caught in his charity. . . . I did n't hear the rest of his story. I was thinking about the little woman—you could almost see through her; and thinking about Jim Flowers. He had made me desperately ashamed for believing all men counterfeit good fellows like myself. I was happy and sad, and felt sticky from cream and sugar and nutmeg.

"I 'm going home, Jim," I said presently. "It 's been a dandy night—and if there is n't anything on, you 'd better have dinner with

me to-morrow—a sort of ‘Christmas in India.’ . . . We can go somewhere and talk about people and things——”

Jim thought it might be managed. He looked grateful. He said he had heard somewhere that a friend is a present a man gives himself. He would see me, any way, he declared, holding out his hand.

Christmas was gray and cheerless—a boarding-house, sleeping-late sort of nightmare to remember. I hurried forth to escape, and was at Richter’s before Jim came. The old man was behind. He had seen the woman in the shawl the night before. . . . I brought up the subject—musing on the pathetic figure.

“*Ach*,” said Richter, “dot vas his wife. She has been here before. Dot’s de only way she seem to get money out of Jim.”



## TO A BIRD

BY ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON

I FOUND you fallen from your nest one day,  
With little frightened eyes and wounded wing.  
I healed the hurt and coaxed the fear away,  
And then you bravely tried to chirp and sing.  
I bought a cage to keep you for a pet:  
So little of the woodland you had known  
I felt assured you would in time forget,  
And be content to stay with me alone.  
But when the summer came, a longing grew  
To fly far, far—you even told me so  
In your mute way, with eyes fixed on the blue.  
I understood the wish, and let you go.

Ah, little bird, life’s cage still holds me fast,  
But a kind hand will free me, too, at last.

## TWO-TAILS

*By Owen Oliver*

THERE was an urgent admission in private room D, the second surgeon told me, when I returned from my constitutional. It was appendicitis, and he proposed an operation the next day. I went to see the patient and found that he was young Harry Myles, who had been a friendly acquaintance since he came to Colonia, where I had charge of the civil hospital. I knew the trouble, and had warned him that it would come to this.

"Well," he said, with a feeble grin, "you've got me in at last."

"I'll soon get you out," I assured him cheerfully. "Let's have a look at you. . . . Umph! . . . I'd better operate to-morrow and get it over. It's nothing much. I'll send you home for Christmas. It's really nothing serious, Harry."

"Good man! . . . If anything *should* go wrong, I want you to do something for me."

"Girl, eh?" I suggested.

"Oh, play Solomon, if it pleases you! . . . It is a girl; but she's only a flapper. At least, she was when I knew her. Now she's nineteen. I've got a photo taken two years ago. The address is on the envelope. You'd better keep it."

"The photo?"

"No, I'll keep that—you grinning old idiot! If I should n't go home——"

"Don't be an owl! You will. You need n't flatter yourself that you've any complications, because you have n't."

"Then you can earn the reputation of the kind friend cheaply! I want you to promise that if—if necessary—you'll drop her a line. You can explain that Santa Claus is unavoidably prevented from appearing in person, but that you are sending what he meant to bring her. It's that queer little gold and ivory elephant, with two tails—the thing you fussed over when you came to my rooms last week. Tell her I said that the nicest curio I ever met had two tails—and the nicest girl! She'll understand. You can add that I very heartily wished her all the luck in the world. That's all. I say, old man, I feel jolly rotten."



"Of course you do!" I consoled him. "Of course you do! It's an excellent sign at this stage. Shall I drop her a line to-morrow to say it's over all right?"

He shook his head.

"It's purely a Christmas acquaintance," he said. "The queerest business you ever knew. I'll tell you some time."

I went and sat with him in the evening—I thought it would keep his mind off the operation—and he told me this story.

It was a funny acquaintance, and it came about from an absurd cause—two glasses of punch! It was Christmas Eve, and I had one glass at the club, and another with my landlord when I got back to my rooms about eight. They did n't make me tight, but I never took much, and they were different kinds, and I felt a bit above myself.

A wire had come from my sister's in the afternoon, stopping me from going there, because the kids had developed measles. So I thought I might as well unpack my trunk. I handed the things out and dumped them on the bed. I put away my clothes and gear, but I did n't know what to do with the rest. There were four presents for the kids that it was no use sending; and there was a Santa Claus costume that I had meant to dress up in, to give them the presents. I had been awfully proud of the Santa Claus idea, and I put the things on to have a look at myself in the glass. There was a snowy wig, with a crown of holly and mistletoe, and a white beard, and a mask—an awful red-nosed thing!—and a long scarlet robe. I looked the part to a *t*!

When I saw myself, I was mad to play Santa Claus to some one; and I decided that I'd be Santa Claus to the landlord's kids, and buy some fresh presents for my nephews and nieces, when they were convalescent. I did, of course.

I picked up the bundles and started for the door. Then I remembered that the landlord had n't any children! The punch was wearing off, you see.

I walked about the room thinking it out; and I reflected that, if the landlord had n't a family, other people had; and I recollected four kids named Ellison, who lived on the other side of the square. I did n't know them, but I wanted to. More precisely, I wanted to know their grown-up sister. She was a beauty! She's married now, and does n't come into the story.

Three of the kids were small, and the presents I had meant for my sister's youngsters fitted them nicely. The fourth present was bought for a girl of twelve; but it was a silver bracelet, and I thought it would do for the Ellison girl who had just come home from boarding-school for the holidays. She looked about fifteen; a saucy miss with two pigtails; ever so saucy!

Of course I saw that the business was likely to lead to a jolly row with the mother. (She was a big, queenly person!) But I hoped they'd think I was some relative in disguise, or his emissary; and, anyhow, I could always run away; and playing Santa Claus is n't a crime. So I decided to do it. I put my mackintosh and hood over my make-up, and trudged round to the Ellisons'. The last effects of the punch evaporated when I got out in the air, and I realized that I was being an ass; but I went on from sheer devilment.

A servant answered my knock. I flung off the mackintosh, and she yelled first and giggled afterwards.

"Tell the young people that Santa Claus wishes to see them," I commanded, trying to make my voice sound like that of an important old uncle.

There were shrieks from within at once. Two boys of about seven and six ran into the hall, and a little seraph girl of about three, in a nice white nightie. The two-pigtailed miss looked over the banisters, and then ran down to the foot of the stairs. It was the first time I'd seen her so close, and I liked her immensely. She was a specially pretty kid, and she looked chock-full of mischief!

"What is your name?" I asked the bigger boy.

"Thomas Lushington Ellison," he said, staring at me with his eyes nearly bolting out of his head.

"And what is your conduct?" I inquired pompously.

He puzzled over the word.

"I have n't got one," he denied at last, and Miss Two-Tails laughed suddenly. She seemed to have a great sense of humor.

"Have you been bad or very bad this year?" I substituted.

"Mother's going to tell Santa Claus I've been better lately," he claimed rather uneasily.

"And she is n't going to say nuffink about the window he broke," the smaller boy added.

"Shut up, you fool!" Thomas cried. He made a rush at the offender, but Two-Tails collared him scientifically under her arm, turned him head over heels, set him on his feet again, and warded him off the younger brother.

"He's been—a boy!" she told me. Her wicked black eyes seemed to be penetrating my mask.

"That does n't sound very good," I remarked. "Still, Santa Claus was a boy, in the days of the ark! Here you are, Tommy!"

I handed over a gun and one of those soldier's sets that they sew on a card—cap, tunic, and so on—and he at once began to equip himself.

I found that Arthur Washington Ellison was n't "going to do it again." I could n't discover what "it" was; but I gave him the bene-

fit of the doubt, and a clockwork monkey. He started it going in the hall, and yelled and clapped his hands.

I said I was sure that the angel in the white nightie was a good girl; and she said, "Ess, dood some lickle times!" I gave her a doll that opened and shut its eyes; and she gravely led me under the mistletoe to be kissed!

I held out the bracelet to Miss Two-Tails; but she hung back, as if she suspected my intentions. Honestly, I had n't thought anything about the mistletoe being over my head till she looked up at it! But then I did. Two-Tails was the sort of youngster that a fellow *would* kiss under the mistletoe, if he got the chance.

"I don't know if I can take *you* at face value?" I remarked. "You saucy little Two-Tails!"

"I don't know if I can take *you* at face value," she answered impudently. "I expect the mask improves you!" She giggled and looked at me with her pretty head on one side.

"Handsome is as handsome does, Two-Tails!" I stated. I held out the bracelet again. "You shall have it, if you come and take it handsomely," I offered.

Two-Tails made a lightning dart and grabbed it before I realized her intention. I made a rush to seize her, but she was too quick for me and escaped to the lower stairs. I took three strides in pursuit. Then I came to the doorway of the sitting-room—and the queenly mamma standing in it!

"I should like to know——" she began; and I bolted for the front door. I seized my mackintosh and put it on as I went down the steps. Then I ran as fast as my costume would allow. I heard footsteps close behind me, and, glancing over my shoulder, I saw Two-Tails in pursuit. She had evidently come out from the lower door, and meant to discover my identity. I put on the pace, and was getting away from her; but I stepped on my robe, and fell over in the snow. When I rose Two-Tails was close upon me. She pulled up and dodged about just out of reach. She dumped the bracelet on the ground.

"I shan't keep it unless I know who you are," she declared, tossing her head. "I'm not a little kid, to take presents from anybody."

"If I tell you who I am, will you be a sport and keep it?" I asked.

"I don't know if I'll keep it," she replied. "I expect not; but I'll be a sport."

"I'll trust you for that," I said; and took off my mask.

Two-Tails skipped a little further out of range with a squeal.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed; but she did not seem so surprised as I had expected. I rather fancied that the little monkey would have been more surprised if I had been some one else. "You *have* got a cheek!" she observed. "Whatever made you do it?"

"I was fearfully dull and lonely," I apologized, "and I wanted a bit of fun; and you kids—I mean you *and* your kids—looked jolly nice. So I came to your house. Now, be a sport, Two-Tails."

"Two-Tails indeed!" she cried scornfully. "You mean *Sis* looked nice. I've seen you make eyes when I've been out with her."

"Exactly!" I said. "When *you* have been with her!"

"You great silly!" She laughed whole-heartedly. "You don't take me in like that! You consider me a little kid! Well, so I am!"

"Kid enough to keep the bracelet?" I suggested. "Please! I shall feel rotten if you don't."

"I shall feel rotten if I do," she retorted.

"No," I said. "You'll feel that you've done a kindness to a poor, lonely old Santa Claus who is n't having much fun this year."

"Are you really lonely?" she asked, with a trace of sympathy.

"Frightfully! I always go to my sister's, but her youngsters are ill this time. We have awful fun there. Santa Claus and snap-dragon and forfeits—and mistletoe. Well, I've got a bit of mistletoe, anyhow, Two-Tails—in my wreath."

I moved a step nearer, and she a step back.

"Certainly not!" She tossed her head.

"But I have!"

"Silly. . . . Well, I'll keep it—like a sport! Go further back while I pick it up. . . . Thank you."

"I could have grabbed you while you picked it up," I remarked. "But I'm a sport too, Two-Tails."

"I suppose you did n't want to," she suggested. She bubbled with suppressed amusement.

"I was afraid you did n't," I said. "I did! I do!"

I drew a little nearer again. She wavered; I captured her.

"You'll make me drop the bracelet," she protested, dodging her head about.

"It will be your own fault for not paying your debt like a sport. . . . Please! . . . You pretty little Two-Tails! . . . Thank you!"

"I did n't," she denied untruthfully. "You made me. *You are* cheeky!"

She extricated herself from my arm and ran. She turned at the corner and waved her hand. I kissed mine. Then I went back to my rooms. I laughed a good deal.

The next morning I had a wire inviting me to my cousin Jack's for the holidays, and went there at once. When I came back I kept a lookout for Two-Tails, but did n't see her. I learned afterwards that she went to an aunt's and returned to school from there. I had almost forgotten the business till I saw her pass with her mother, the day

before the next Christmas Eve. She was a very pretty youngster before, but now she had grown distractingly pretty. You'll think me a lunatic, but I wrote to my sister at once to say that I could n't arrive till the Christmas night train. I meant to play Santa Claus again to Two-Tails, somehow or other, before I went.

I prowled about the square on Christmas Eve afternoon; and at last I met Two-Tails with her baby sister. (She had reduced the two tails to one, as a matter of fact.) She wore a neat fur cap and jacket, and looked quite demure, except her eyes. They brimmed over with mischief.

"You're too good a sport to cut me, Two-Tails," I asserted; and she consented to shake hands.

"You're not a good enough sport to come again this year," she challenged me.

"Do you dare me?" I asked.

"Yes; dare—dare—dare!" She looked provokingly impudent.

"I dare *you*," I told her. "I'll bring you a present, if you'll take it under the mistletoe."

"There are two obstacles to that," she stated: "Mother—and me!"

"I'm afraid of your mother," I observed.

"'Nothing venture'!" she remarked. She looked at me as if she meant, "Would n't you like to!"

"Nothing to have, don't venture," I retorted. "I'll venture, if you'll meet me afterwards, like you did last year."

"The idea! I've grown up since then!"

"You've grown up very prettily!" I assured her.

"Have I? I got in an awful row for chasing you last year. I said you ran too fast for me. You did till you fell! You looked very ridiculous!" She giggled. "I *did* laugh when I thought about it afterwards."

"So did I," I told her; "especially when I thought of the mistletoe. Well, I dare you!"

She shook her head.

"You don't know Mother!" she apologized.

"I know you! . . . If you can't meet me this evening, meet me three days after Christmas; when I come back from my sister's."

"It would serve you right if I said 'yes.' . . . I'm going away that morning. I don't live home much. It's my step-mother. Father's dead."

"I'll come back a day sooner if you'll meet me," I offered.

"I shan't unless Santa Claus comes," she said doubtfully.

"If he comes, you promise?" I asked.

"Well—I know he won't; so I'll promise."

"Where will you meet me to pay your debt?" I inquired.

"I don't promise to—to pay," she denied. "You're too good a sport to make me if I don't want to, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said; "but——"

"There's no 'but' about it," she insisted. "Promise."

"I promise," I said.

"Then, I'll meet you at the post-office at five o'clock; the afternoon after Boxing Day. Mother will meet you when you come! She's on the lookout for Santa Claus."

"'Nothing venture, nothing have'!" I reminded her.

"I haven't promised anything," she declared. She laughed at me, swung her one tail over her shoulder, and went.

I bought four presents, including a vanity bag for Two-Tails, and after dinner I dressed up and went to the Ellisons' as before. This time the stately mamma met me in the hall. She wished to know who I was, before allowing me to give the presents.

"We are not permitted to disclose the names of our clients, madam," I said; "but if any one inquires, we are allowed to refer them to the shop, provided that they allow us to give the presents."

"What shop?" she asked quickly.

"You have not permitted me to give the presents yet," I objected. "May I do so?"

She demurred for a time, declaring that it was "very strange"; but finally she consented, and I handed over the things. I shall never forget Two-Tails' wicked, tantalizing look as she took hers. I was right under the mistletoe!

I referred Mrs. Ellison to the Bon Marché Toy Store. Needless to say that was *not* where I had bought the things! Then I left.

Two-Tails kept her appointment. We walked in the park for an hour and a half. She was the dearest, merriest little teasing creature to talk to; but she objected to paying her debt, because I had no mistletoe with me. With the mistletoe, she argued, it was only fun; without, it was flirtation; and I had no business to flirt with a girl of sixteen.

"Well," I said, "Two-Tails, you shall choose. I'll go and buy a piece of mistletoe and kiss you for fun; or we'll do it without and kiss good-by as friends. Which shall it be?"

She colored hotly, and seemed to lose her sauciness for a moment.

"If people are friends," she said slowly—"if you really mean that—it's good-by for a year. I am going to a school in Germany again. I think, if you are really friends, you should n't make fun of it."

"For friends, then," I said. "You dear Two-Tails!" I always called her that.

We kissed for friends; and afterwards we kissed again for good-by.



"I'll come next year," I told her, "to bring your present, and to fetch mine."

When next Christmas came I was stewing out here. She had said I was n't to write to her at school, because they spied on the letters. So I could n't warn her beforehand; but I sent her a letter to arrive at her house on Christmas Eve; and I sent the presents. Hers was a native idol. She wrote and thanked me, and enclosed her photo; the one you've seen. That was my present, she said. So she did n't owe me "any fun." She signed herself my friend.

Last Christmas I sent her a piece of the native silver-work, and she sent me a card she had painted herself, and a letter. She seemed to have grown up a deal, judging from the letter. I had told her that I hoped to be home this Christmas, and to meet her. She said that she would not refuse to renew "our quaint acquaintance"; but she felt rather afraid that we should be disappointed. "I am not a naughty, impudent little girl now," she reminded me; "and there is one thing that I don't quite like about you, Mr. Myles. I don't think you should have taken advantage of a naughty, impudent child. So I am not sure that I shall think you nice." However, she put a postscript: "Please don't think this letter nasty about you. I only feel nasty and ashamed about myself. What I mean is that, if you want to be friends, you must start afresh, and make friends with a sedate, grown-up young lady." She added that, if I really wanted to, I might send one letter at midsummer to an address in France, where she was going to teach English for a time. I wrote and declared that I should come home to keep Christmas, and to make the acquaintance of a new friend—a dignified, grown-up lady! Still, I said, I hoped very much that this lady would remind me of a certain dear, saucy little Two-Tails. She wrote back and said she would be pleased to see me. It was a very grown-up note; rather the Polite Letter-Writer style, but it concluded that she really did hope that we should find that we could be friends with each other. . . . Well, you've got to get me home for Christmas, you see. If you don't—I'm not funking, old man. It makes me more cheerful to think that there's no risk of little Two-Tails thinking I'd forgotten her—if you don't, you'll send the two-tailed elephant, and my message. I'd say something more, only it seems to me it would make the kid take it to heart and feel miserable; and there's really no reason why she should. I had one of my wild ideas about this year's Santa Claus. I was going to take another present, as well as the elephant, on the off-chance that she'd be willing to take it: an engagement ring! It's very silly, isn't it? . . .

All right! I'll go to sleep now. You've bucked me up tremendously, old chap. . . . Very well. I'll write and tell you the finish of the story. The appendix! . . . Ha, ha, ha! Good-night!

The operation turned out to be rather a bad one; but Harry pulled through all right, and I got him off by the Christmas Mail. He took with him the two-tailed elephant and a wonderful ring. Early in the new year I had a letter from him. I give the important portion, omitting a preliminary oration upon myself and a peroration upon Miss Two-Tails!

I masqueraded as Santa Claus in the evening; but the real business was done in the afternoon, when I dressed up in a frock-coat and pot-hat, and called to see Miss Alice Ellison. I found her a very dignified, tall young lady. She rather took my breath away for a moment. Then I said, "Two-Tails!" And she said, "Santa Claus!" and laughed, and gave her head a little toss; and I said, "Oh, thank goodness! You're *just* the same!"

"Oh!" she cried hastily. "But—but I'm not! Won't you take a seat, Mr. Myles? Is Colonia a very interesting place? You must tell me all about it."

I began trying to talk like an afternoon caller; but after a minute I gave up the attempt.

"You were always a sport," I blurted out. "Don't make me start afresh. I only got up after an operation to come home, and—the last thing I did beforehand was to arrange with the doctor to send home your Christmas present, if he could n't send me. This—this Santa Claus business was the thing I thought most about out there, and—don't make me start like a stranger. Will you take it?"

I held out the elephant. She took it with a funny little cry, and wiped her eyes.

"I—I am so glad that you have brought it yourself," she said. "Santa Claus! It is so pretty. And you were so kind to think of me. I am so pleased to see you. You are not a stranger, but a—an old friend. Let's shake hands again, shall we? . . . Thank you, Santa Claus! It is lovely!"

"There is something else," I said. "It's a ring. May I put it on your engagement finger, Two-Tails?"

She gave a gasp; and suddenly she put up her hands to her hair; and down it came in two plaits, one over each shoulder!

"Two-Tails!" she cried, with a little sob that was half a laugh. "She always waited for you—ever since she kissed for friends!"

"I have waited for Two-Tails," I declared, "ever since she kissed—she did, you know, though she said she did n't!—for fun. I don't know the right finger, because there has n't been any one else."

"There has n't been any one else for me either," she stated, "but I know. This one! . . . Thank you, Santa Claus!"

## "GURLS IS FIERCE"

*By Lucy Copinger*

"GURLS is fierce," said Bum O'Reilly, as he contemptuously threw a set of paper dolls and their accompanying wardrobes into the waste-basket. He was cleaning up after school, putting to rights the signs of a day's struggle after knowledge in the Primer Class, when, finding the dolls tucked in the Manual-Training box on Marie Schaefer's desk, he forgot entirely the marbles hidden in his own, and thus virtuously complained.

"I betcher feelin' mad yer ain't got a lot more boys to teach instid of 'em," he went on, confidently raising a freckled face to Miss Lucy. But Miss Lucy, often wearying in guiding the stumbling footsteps of the future Presidents of her country, only smiled non-committally. Too recent were the days when she, a timid probationer from the training-school, had been given charge of the sixty little aliens in the large school down among the tenements. Bum, or, as he appeared on the roll-book, James O'Reilly, had been the untamed terror of the Primer Class, and his transformation into her right-hand man and loyal friend had been a task made possible only by the unusually soft spot in her heart for this warm-hearted, incorrigible pupil.

After this very sweeping defiance of the other sex, what happened to Bum a few days later was surprising. The Primer Class had just come in from recess, and in the temporary absence of Miss Lucy, Bum was "keeping order." As a monitor, stern enforcer of relentless laws, Bum was without a peer, and a daily proof that his was indeed the race of kings. He had just brought forth Sophie Bauerschmidt, the talker, to that place of punishment the corner, where she stood in tears, when the door opened and Miss Lucy entered, holding by the hand a new arrival in the Primer Class. This addition was Gladys Genevieve Jones, an elaborately overdressed little girl with round blue eyes and golden curls. Miss Lucy was still a little breathless from her interview with Gladys's mother, who had descended upon her in an overpowering atmosphere of cheap perfumery and imitation jewelry, and had impressed upon Miss Lucy the necessity of separating her offspring from the common herd of the Primer Class. "I've gotter be refined or bust," she had concluded emphatically, as she retired with a loud clanking of bracelets, bangles, and chatelaine boxes.

As she removed Frederick William, her littlest boy, from his seat of protection nearest her desk, and put Gladys there, Miss Lucy marvelled at the unmoved vacantness with which the new-comer received the critical stare from so many eyes. Later she came to know that this immobility was the most conspicuous thing about Gladys, and seemed to invest her with a sphinx-like fascination. It took Miss Lucy only a little time to find out also that this air of mystery shrouded an absolutely blank mind, and that the simplest teachings rolled off Gladys Genevieve like water off a duck. But although she was the most stupid child that Miss Lucy had ever known, she was always sweet-tempered, and for this reason, as well as because of her golden curls, her lacy dresses, and her toothsome lunches, she soon became the worshipped pet of the Primer Class.

It was one afternoon, when Gladys had been in school about a week, that Miss Lucy first noticed the change in Bum. It was after school, and the children had all gone home, except Gladys, who had mislaid her embroidered school-bag, and Bum, who was cleaning the boards. Finally Gladys went out with a polite little "good-by," and a moment later Miss Lucy heard an anguished moan and looked up to find Bum standing beside her with a very red face.

"Miss, I'm orful sorry," he explained with groans, "but I got orful pains. I'm 'fraid I can't be helping ye terday." Then, without another word, the sufferer bolted out the door after Gladys.

The deserted Miss Lucy tiptoed cautiously out into the hall and looked out into the school-yard. Near the gate she saw the tableaux. Gladys had stopped and was watching Bum with a polite curiosity while that recent sufferer cavorted and twisted bravely before her in a number of intricate handsprings. He made a funny little figure, performing there in his ragged clothes. It was midwinter, but his hat was of straw and fitted down over his ears, he was wearing an old pair of his mother's shoes, through which one bare, dirty toe stuck, and his trousers, held up perilously by safety-pins, began near his shoulders and came down to his shoe-tops. Finally, having concluded his performance by the difficult feat of turning a handspring neatly into his fallen hat and rising with it on his head, he stood before Gladys with an expression that ineffectually tried to be humble. Then she for whom all this had been spoke.

"My, you've got the dirtiest nose I ever saw on any boy in all my life," said Gladys serenely, and walked out the gate.

Miss Lucy went back to her room, and, unassisted, began to clean boards and straighten up.

"'A fool there was, and he made his prayer,'" she quoted cynically.

This incident was the beginning of the love of Bum O'Reilly, which waxed each day fiercer, and for a time completely upset the Primer Class. Coming the next day with the clean face for which Miss Lucy

had pleaded so long and so vainly, he deposited two round candies on Gladys's desk. When Gladys appeared she ate the candies, and, during a lull in the lessons, thanked August Schmidt for them. That young man smirkingly accepted the thanks, and returned a little later from the recess-yard with wails and a closing eye.

Presuming upon a platonic friendship founded upon a series of fights in which she, owing to the mean feminine habit of using her finger-nails, usually came off the victor, Anna Karenina began to smoulder with a gloomy jealousy that vented itself in indiscriminate pinches. When put on the bench in the punishment corner, she made a face at Miss Lucy.

Finally a scandal was revealed.

"When you iss out of the room to-day," Sophie the tattler whispered cautiously, "Bum he kissed Gladys Chones, und he says any one wot tells he will git 'em outside und beat 'em. Gladys let him do it 'cause she was thinking she would git the bun wot he stole offer Freddy Schneider. Und she did, too," she concluded enviously.

"Und Anna iss going to kill Gladys," she went on, "mit a long knife. She seen it in the movies, she sez, just like she iss going to do it. There wuz two ladies fighting in the pickchure, one lady wot run a knife in another lady, und Anna sez that iss wot she will do mit Gladys."

"How did Anna get in the moving-pictures?" asked Miss Lucy.

"Miss," explained Sophie, "when efenings come she sets all the time down by the gutter where there ain't no polizmens. When ladies und gemlums comes she sets und she hollers orful. Und soon a gemlum or a lady stops und sez, 'Wot iss it, liddle girl?' und then Anna sez her families iss all det, und she haf lost the money wot she wuz gitting milk for her liddle sister (Miss, it iss all lies), und then the peoples gifs her sometimes more as fif cents, und she goes in the movies. Und once a lady sez, 'Come mit me, poor liddle think, und I will bay you milk,' und then Anna made a nose at her, like wot you sez ain't nice, und run down a alley."

Miss Lucy had hardly recovered from the shock of these awful disclosures before she faced another trouble. Bum stayed home from school one day, and the next appeared in a pair of wonderful red plush trousers. Also he brought a note from his mother. "Missis loosey," the worried woman had written on a piece of brown and greasy paper, "i dunno wots rong with jimmy he wont kom to skool no more if i dont let him wer his sundy Pants pleze dont let him set in nothun becuz they is all i got to put on him wen he goes wit his fawther to Mass and oblidge missis oreilly."

Miss Lucy, accepting the guardianship of the precious "sundy Pants," noticed that these were not the only tactics Bum had adopted. He had invested in a grab-bag, and, wise this time to the danger of anonymous gifts, he had written on the bag "urs trooly jams oreilly." It was a



little disappointing when, after gazing delightedly at the prize, a string of blue glass beads, Gladys, who could not read a word, looked politely around for the donor. Braving Miss Lucy's displeasure, he made a megaphone of his hands. "I done it," he whispered loudly across the room. "Yer welcome." Whereupon Gladys favored him with a small smile that made him turn fiery red, with a pleasure that even Miss Lucy's sharp rebuke could not dull.

Miss Lucy might not have been so sharp in her reprimand, had not the Principal that noon told her of his intentions to come in during the course of that afternoon and examine the Primer Class in reading. It was not that the Primer Class could not read, but would the Principal understand the delicate vagaries of the struggling intellect of six years? Some had to be spurred, others coaxed. And how could he know that if, for instance, it was Sophie he tried to coax, she would, thus encouraged, burst out into a revelation of embarrassing family secrets? Again, that if he harried Marie, usually her prize performer, she would at once sit down in tears and with wild cries for maternal protection. Add to this the spectacle of Anna Karenina glooming darkly in the punishment corner, and it was no wonder that Miss Lucy's smile grew strained. When at last the door opened and the Principal appeared, he was carrying an armful of books. These, he explained to Miss Lucy, were the new primers, wonderfully compiled on the latest pedagogical lines, and quite different from the A-B-C books of a less enlightened generation. He intended to try them on the Primer Class in a test lesson.

As he had only a few copies of the book, he proceeded to double up the children accordingly. In this arrangement he somehow managed to bring together the very ones that Miss Lucy, with hard-earned wisdom, had placed as far apart as possible. Bum and Mikey Phalen, compatriots, but bloody foes, were paired off; Sophie and Lizzie, hair-pullers and staunch upholders of an old family feud, came next; also the two gluttons, Frederick William and August Schmidt, who immediately started a wrangle over a nibbled ginger-snap. Finally he caught sight of the gloomy Anna in the corner. "Come, little girl," he said genially—"come and sit down by this nice, smiling little girl with the clean face and hands;" and he indicated the neat Gladys, who, with the glass beads on her plump neck, was sitting with a self-satisfied smile on her face. At this obvious comparison a terrible look came into Anna's dark eyes, but she squeezed docilely in beside Gladys. With her unkempt look, her toes sticking through her ragged shoes, her dark, passionate little face, already seamed and lined with the intensity of her emotions, she brought Gladys's pink-cheeked beauty out more forcibly. Miss Lucy felt a sudden throb of pity for the neglected little creature, but as she saw Anna's unfathomable dark eyes rest on the glass beads, she decided that her intense little pupil would bear close watching.



Meanwhile the Principal was pursuing his untroubled way through the reading lesson, and the Primer Class was acquitting itself well. A slight interruption came when Sophie and Lizzie were reprimanded for talking, and Sophie started to explain.

"Mister," she said plaintively, "it wuz her. She sez you wuz a Jew, und I sez you ain't, and she sez, where iss your hair gone? und I sez I donno, und she sez you iss fatter 'n my fader, und I sez you ain't, und she sez, 'Liar,' und I sez it, too, und that iss all we wuz saying."

The Principal glowered at Sophie for a minute, and then, to preserve his dignity, turned to write on the board. Miss Lucy leaned over her books to hide a giggle. It was the moment unguarded for Anna's vengeance to strike. There was a loud thud, a series of shrieks, and as Miss Lucy and the Principal rushed forward they beheld Gladys screaming upon the floor, the beads torn from her neck, and the imprint of Anna's fingers on her plump cheek. In the aisle Anna and Bum were fighting madly for the possession of a broken string clasped fiercely in Anna's dirty little hand.

While Miss Lucy picked up and pacified the sobbing Gladys, the Principal dragged Anna and Bum apart with no gentle touch. Beneath their feet he found the torn, trampled remains of one of his precious primers. Thereupon he gave Miss Lucy one awful look that told her she was to blame for it all. Then he marched the two offenders out of the room before him. "I'll attend to these," he announced darkly to Miss Lucy, and the whole Primer Class trembled.

Miss Lucy never knew exactly what punishment was meted out to the two. Somewhat later she witnessed their return, quite crushed and subdued, yet with a subtle air of their old-time comradeship between them. She did see, however, the end of Bum O'Reilly's romance. The next day Gladys's mother withdrew her daughter, and upon perfumed paper, but with uncertain spelling, announced her intention of sending her to a more select, uptown school. That day after school Bum hurried out. Miss Lucy, following a little later, caught sight of the boy hanging wistfully near the corner that Gladys passed daily. When Gladys appeared, lovely and serene, it was to walk by her admirer in disdainful oblivion. As he, with a pitiful attempt at his usual swagger, held out to her a perfectly new, unlicked, all-day sucker, orange-flavored and costing him his last cent, she spoke to him quite sweetly.

"Go away," she said gently. "I don't want your old candy, and you're only a dirty, red-headed boy that lives up an alley, and my mother says I am never to speak to you again."

The next day Bum returned to his old duties as general utility man. He never referred to his brief bondage except indirectly.

"Gurls is fierce," he remarked, as he cleaned boards with his old-time happy vigor. "I wisht ther was n't nothin' but boys everywhere."

# "MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

*By Edwin L. Sabin*

WHAT a delight if at Christmas-time we all might be children, who take what comes, and give as they list (or are listed by their elders), with never a thought upon cost and the like. You never hear children say, "Merry Christmas!" languidly or perfunctorily; you never catch them groaning as Christmas approaches or relieved when Christmas has passed; and you rarely catch them weighing their gifts in the money balance. If you do, then as a zealous parent you righteously impress upon them the error of their ways.

In some households Christmas-time has far departed from its original intention of "Peace on earth, good-will toward men." It has been metamorphosed into a regular bugbear, lacking peace and lacking sincere good-will. Instead of opening the heart, with glad expectancy, to "hear the angels sing"; instead of watching to "follow the star," the thoughts are feverishly directed earthward, entirely, and the heart is attuned in manner thus:

"Oh, dear! Forty-five names upon my list! I have n't half of them provided for yet, and every one gave me something last year. I do hope some of them omit me this year, so I can omit them next. Tom says we ought to economize, and that we need not give each other anything; but that would n't be Christmas. Still—oh, dear! here are forty-five names. What am I ever going to do? The expense is perfectly scandalous. But we must make the most of Christmas. So let's see——"

Tom (*log.*):

"Confound it! Funny how Christmas always comes at the end of the year, when a fellow's hard up. I wish we all could cut out this present-swapping. What the dickens shall I give Helen? Hand-bag, I guess. Hand-bags never are amiss, are they? Let me see your best leather hand-bag, please. Yes, shopping-bag—reticule—catch-all—whatever you call it. Is that it? Thirty-two dollars? What? Without initials, you say? Initials six more? All right. Send it 'round to the office, with statement. There, by thunder, that's off my mind!"

Not much chance for the heavenly strains to penetrate a mundane envelope such as this; not much chance for the beams of the star to attract eyes down-bent upon a check-list or a check-book; not much

chance for "peace" and "good-will" to permeate this anxiety to even up in dollars and cents, or to make the gift count for more than the giver, the matter more than the spirit. Christmas is not peace; it is hard work, care, and striving. But it should be, and can be, different.

I don't suppose that there is much show to have a law passed regulating the expense of Christmas gifts. My idea—my own idea—is to follow the example of school-boards which limit the outlay upon graduation (pardon me, I should say "commencement") dresses at the exercises. Formerly, as goes the impression, the poor girl who was valedictorian in a cheese-cloth dress was eclipsed by the wealthy but mentally undistinguished young lady in an imported tulle (am I correct?) gown. Now the wisdom of various school-boards has seen fit to allay this apparent injustice by limiting the expense to \$1.49 each. And my idea is to assemble a Christmas Peace League at the Hague and delete the Christmas-gift warfare.

What a mistake to have Christmas tarnished by any rivalry save the rivalry of being naturally happy, and of naturally transferring happiness to others! "Merry Christmas" is not to be bought. Christmas preëminently is the day for throwing out your chest until all cares slide off, and for being sincerely, unaffectedly well-wishing.

We in America have three great popular, historic festal days: Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The Fourth scarcely is to be mentioned in the same breath with Thanksgiving; and Thanksgiving itself is based upon a temporal event: but Christmas has a deeper meaning. Moreover, it is a celebration world-wide.

Think of it, as it has travelled down the ages: the mystery of the Druids, the Yule of the ancient Germans, the Yule of the later Saxons and of Merrie England, the Noël of France, the festival of Kriss Kringle and of Saint Nicholas in Germany, of Santa Klaus in Holland, and of the three together in America—for we of America are not satisfied with one mythical patron; in our extravagance, we borrow the three. Think of it, as covering all countries where lives the white race; and of covering our own country, in especial, from the poinsettias of California to the snow-drifts of Maine. Then consider the sheer rejoicing which prompted it, and shame it by commercialism, if you can!

What do we care—you and I—if the gift which comes to us costs only seventy-eight cents (as we afterwards ascertain), whereas that which we have given cost seventy-eight dollars or some such foolishness? Why should we devote days and nights to measuring off good-will by a shopping capacity, or why should we confine ourselves to one name or to forty-five? What does that amount to, anyhow? Is "Merry Christmas" to be symbolized by that letter S entwined about a pole—like a snake throttling conscience or heart?

No! We of the M. C. B., which stands for Merry Christmas Band,

and Make Christmas Better, hereby resolve that Christmas shall be Christmas according to Dickens—who is the Christmas Hoyle. Some of us abide by the "Christmas Carol" and the transformation of *Scrooge*, and some of us abide by the "Pickwick Papers" and the festivities at the farm. These secular creeds are optional, for from either and both emanates the true Christmas spirit.

It may not be practicable to have the wassail kettle on the hearth, especially in a flat where the gas-grate leaks; but it is perfectly practicable to have the wreath in the window. And this simple expression of Christmas-tide without and within lends a wondrous atmosphere of Christmas sentiment. There are men—and perhaps women—to whom the Christmas wreath in the window is a superfluity. To them I say, whether you deem yourselves too rich for such or too poor for such, don't be a *Scrooge*. Open the heart on Christmas-tide; open it up, and you will find there a spot of green, like the wreaths amidst the snow of the down-town street-corners, and a throb of red blood, like the holly, and a voice of youth, like the Christmas bells.

"Merry Christmas!" Let us say it round and full, and as if we meant it; say it with a grip of the hand or a clap on the back or a wave and a grin; not to have it out and over with (as sometimes is the attitude toward the festival itself), but in sheer enjoyment of the sound; say it so that it is a "Hello!" and "Hurrah!" and "God bless you!" in one. That is the actual and recognized gift of Christmas—this "Merry Christmas," passed along from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, like some fairy boon swiftly circuiting a globe. Now, if indeed it were a tangible object, if indeed it were an article of great price, either because of real or attached value, then what excitement would it create! But it is only a pleasant sound in our ears, and we are accustomed to it. Yet it is Christmas, the soul of Christmas, passed on and on; and, precious though it be, the wight without a nickel may give it as liberally as the man or the woman with a billion.



# GRANDMA

*By Temple Bailey*

UP to the time that Crœsus Plain bought six pairs of silk stockings over the counter of his huge department-store from a little white slip of a thing with frightened eyes, the Recording Angel had made few black marks on the page of his soul's history.

But when Crœsus asked, "May I send them to you?" and looked at the palpitating little salesgirl with eyes that held a meaning, the Recording Angel set down these words, underscored and emphasized, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" for Crœsus Plain stood high in church circles and passed the plate on Sundays.

There were six pairs of stockings, as I have said, all black, but black with a difference, for on two of them pink rose-buds rioted over the instep, on two more forget-me-nots were intertwined, and the wickedest pair of all had red heels.

And the little white slip of a thing, whose name was Mary, shivered and shook as she put them into a box, and said, "Hush," to her country-trained conscience, and with her lips, "How kind you are!" Then she addressed the box to Grandma, because she did not want the bundle-wrappers and the cash-girls to know that they were hers.

Now, Grandma was not Mary's real grandmother; she was simply a little old lady who lived across the hall in the same shabby tenement, and kept house for her daughter's son, who was young and strong and the last of his race, and who had the grace to realize his obligation to keep Grandma out of the poorhouse.

When Mary reached home that night, Grandma was at her door. "I guess there's a mistake;" and she dangled the wicked red heels before Mary's eyes. "Nobody would send me silk stockings."

"They're mine," Mary said steadily. "It is n't a mistake."

"Well, they're real pretty, dearie," Grandma quavered. Her heart was like lead. Only once had Mary spoken of Crœsus Plain. He had asked her to lunch with him and to ride afterwards in his automobile. Mary had said, "No." But now—surely Mary's four dollars a week could not compass silk stockings at four dollars a pair?

Mary gathered up her gay trophies and went across the hall to her own room. Grandma sighed, and the sigh seemed to beat against Mary's

closed door. But it remained closed while Mary got out a box of crackers and a bit of bacon and a frying-pan, and spread a napkin on a corner of the table. As she worked, she had a vision of another table—pink-lighted with wax candles, with a glitter of glass and silver, and of herself in a crystal-beaded gown of white tissue which she had seen on the third floor of Cræsus's big store. The face of the man on the other side of the table was blurred. It was not of him that Mary thought, but of the things that he could give her. She thought of a set of ermine, of a gold-meshed bag, of a sapphire-studded bracelet, of a diamond star—how wonderful they had seemed in the store—how much more wonderful to wear them!

Grandma's voice brought her back to realities.

"I've got a nice hot supper, dearie," she said. "You come over."

Mary stood in the open door. She was white and slim, and straight as a forest pine; and young enough to please even Cræsus Plain.

"I'm not hungry," she said, for, with that pink-candled vision, what to her was a pot boiling on the back of Grandma's stove?

"You come," Grandma pleaded. "Bob can't get home till late; and I am alone."

So Mary put away her frying-pan and tucked the stockings out of sight and went over to Grandma's room, where the clean curtains shut out the spring twilight, and shut in a lamp-lighted picture of comfort. A bird sang in a little gold cage, there was a rag-carpet on the floor, a geranium in the window, and on the round black stove the dinner-pot boiled and bubbled.

And when they had partaken of the good food, Grandma brought out a basket of socks and sat on one side of the lamp while Mary sat on the other and they talked of Mary's day.

But not a word did Mary say of Cræsus Plain. And so her story was like French history with Napoleon left out; or a Norse legend without the Vikings; or a fairy tale without Prince Charming; or Red Riding Hood without the Wolf!

And Grandma knew it.

So presently she began to talk of Grandpa. "The spring makes me think of him."

There was silence after that. Mary's mind was on the crystal tissue and the diamond star; Grandma's, on an old-fashioned garden and a young lover's vows.

"On such a night," Grandma dreamed aloud, "I said 'yes,' and we were always poor, but we were always happy."

Mary looked at her across the nimbus of the lamp's glow. "Nobody is poor and happy in these days."

"He picked a bunch of the first violets. I have them yet in my Bible," sighed Ancient Romance.



"And he left you to die in the poorhouse," was the unspoken challenge of Modern Sophistication.

Then Bob came in hungry. He nodded to Mary, and flushed with boyish self-consciousness.

Grandma served a big dish of the stew. Bob had a little bunch of wild violets. He handed them to Mary. "I picked them," he said. "They grow on a bank behind the foundry."

Mary pinned them to her blouse, and the vision of the diamond star and the crystal tissue faded.

Grandma watched the pair. Then she questioned, "Why don't you two take a walk? Mary looks white from staying in."

When they had gone Grandma nodded alone in the dimness. The curtains flapped in the warm spring wind. The bird tucked his head under his wing and slept. The noise in the streets came up faintly.

In the Park, facing the river, Bob and little Mary sat and looked at the golden lights above the water and at the little moon above the lights. Then Bob said, "I love you, little Mary," and Mary answered, "Don't! You may kiss me once, Bob—dear; but I could n't be poor."

And Bob went home later, bitter and bruised, and hating his poverty.

And the next morning Grandma tied on her little plain bonnet and shabby old shawl, and, in some Providence-protected way, reached the West Side and Croesus Plain's store.

Now, Croesus's door was closed more strictly than the gates of Heaven against such as Grandma.

"You can't see him," said the office-boy, and everybody else to whom Grandma applied.

"Well, at least, you'll let me rest," said Grandma; and because she smiled when she said it, the office-boy smiled back, as everybody else smiled when Grandma looked at them.

And when Croesus Plain came out a little later, he saw Grandma smiling, and he stopped and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"You can give me ten minutes of your time;" and Grandma stood up in her plain little bonnet and her shabby old shawl and was ushered into Croesus Plain's private office.

And when they were alone, she opened the box that she carried, and laid on Croesus's desk a pair of silk stockings with red heels, and a pair with rose-buds on the instep, and a pair on which forget-me-nots were intertwined. Then she looked at Croesus Plain, and he turned red.

And he muttered, "I did n't mean anything."

"If you don't mean anything," said Grandma tartly, "stop doing it!"

Thus was the great Croesus Plain arraigned like a schoolboy before Grandma, who had, as you might say, one foot in the poorhouse!

"Stop doing it," said Grandma again, "and let her marry the boy who loves her."

"I thought I'd give her a good time," said Cræsus Plain.

"A good time for a girl like Mary ought to mean youth and love. When it means anything else, it is because some old man has forgotten the things his mother taught him."

There was a mirror opposite Cræsus's desk, and it showed a man well set up, well groomed, and well preserved, so Cræsus frowned at Grandma's adjective, and then he laughed, and with that laugh the evil spirit which had possessed him fled.

"If all women were like you, we would n't forget," he said gallantly.

"And now"—Grandma rose and pushed the stockings towards Cræsus Plain—"how will this affect little Mary?"

Cræsus Plain rose also. "If you mean that I'll take it out on her," he flamed, "I'll have you know that I may be a fool, but I am not a cad."

Grandma held out her hand. "All men are fools," she said, but she said it smiling, so Cræsus forgave her.

Then he made her go to lunch with him. And he told her about his mother, and they parted wistfully.

And when Mary married Bob, Cræsus Plain sent her a wedding present, not of silk stockings, but of good table-linens and flat silver and solid, substantial furniture, such as a father gives his daughter.

And whether Mary lived happily ever after or not, she at least lived righteously, and perhaps the Recording Angel divided the credit between Cræsus and Grandma, but I like to think that he gave it all to Grandma.



## PELLETS OF WISDOM

It's not so bad to go from bad to worse when it's done in an effort to go from bad to better.

*William J. Burtischer*

A WOMAN never lets a man know she doubts his love until she is sure of it beyond a doubt.

*Angie Ousley*

MODERN theology has reduced the old orthodox hell to the embarrassing position of a fireless cooker.

*R. N. Price*

KICK the dogmatic mind and it's sure to snarl and bite.

*H. E. Ising*

# MERCY'S GOODNESS

By Ellis O. Jones

THE Christmas festivities were at their height in the palatial superhome of Mr. Anthracite Wads, the greatest billionaire the world had ever produced. For months Mr. Wads had had his agents scouring the marts of the civilized world to find suitable and sufficiently expensive gifts for his only daughter, Mercy, whom he loved as only a billionaire can love something that is n't money.

In those latter days it was no easy job to make a splashing splurge at Christmas. As a human being little Mercy Wads was not particularly hard to please, but as a billionaire's daughter it was difficult to find something which she wanted and did n't have. Accordingly, the agents whom Wads called his Christmas secretary corps had excavated in Greece, raked up things in Egypt, stolen things in Rome, bought out entire villages in Turkestan, ransacked Manchuria; in short, there was no country or region but had contributed its quota to the occasion. To these specialties were added, of course, those annual necessities such as the very latest 1937 models of opera-coaches, touring-cars, limousines, runabouts, talking machines, piano-players, etc., a large assortment of each article in different shades to match the various costumes of the little girl, whose slightest wish had always been more promptly granted than if she had had a fairy godmother.

Throughout the day, Mercy had enjoyed her gifts. Seated on a dais at the end of a large auditorium which had been especially built for the occasion, with music constantly playing, a brass band in one corner alternating with a symphony orchestra in another, she showed her admiration for the gifts which were paraded before her by butlers and maids and governesses and nurses and chauffeurs and footmen and coachmen and social secretaries. In many ways her appreciation was manifested. Now she clapped her hands joyously. Now she uttered an ecstatic exclamation. Now she made a brief but shrewd comment upon some *objet de vertu*, showing in every case high erudition and the keen insight of an expert connoisseur.

Finally, however, she became a little wearied of the proceeding. The formal entertainment had begun at two in the afternoon, and it was now half after five. The brilliant chandeliers had long been lighted and cast

a flood of splendor upon the multitude of bejewelled and beënamelled gifts which were arranged about the auditorium in booth-form, like those shows which used to be held in Madison Square Garden during the first decade of the present century, although Madison Square Garden was much smaller than Mercy's auditorium. Each booth was presided over by three people—a special secretary, a private detective to watch the secretary, and a policeman to watch the detective.

When Mercy realized that she was growing weary, she excused herself and left the auditorium. From the auditorium she passed through the music-room, thence through the long ball-room, thence through the ancestral gallery, and finally she reached the main reception-hall. The reception-hall opened out on Fifth Avenue about the middle of the large grounds of Mr. Anthracite Wads. These grounds faced Central Park, and occupied what had formerly been eight city blocks. Mr. Wads, however, had long since ordered the cross streets to be closed up and merged with his place, which he usually referred to as his bungalow, to distinguish it from his somewhat more pretentious cottage at Newport and his somewhat less pretentious shack in the Adirondacks.

Motioning the attendant to open the door, Mercy went out on the steps and stood watching the snow-clad trees of the park as they glittered and twinkled from the arc-lights that abounded. As it had not yet snowed that winter, Mr. Wads had been compelled to have the trees covered artificially, in order that not a single factor should be lacking to round out his idea of a perfect Christmas.

She looked up and down the Avenue. It was very quiet, only now and then a limousine or a belated pedestrian who hurried along, hands in his pockets and head drawn down into his coat-collar to protect himself from the biting wind.

Mercy, too, felt the cold and was about to reënter when she saw a little girl who had climbed up to one of the windows of her Christmas auditorium and was feasting her eyes upon the goodies and treasures within. Mercy called to the girl, but could not make her hear. Then she sent the door-man to have the little girl come. "Poor little thing," thought Mercy, "perhaps she has n't as much as I. Why should n't I share my pleasures with her?" It was not the first time that Mercy had longed for companionship of her own age, but she had usually found it difficult to break through the well-nigh impregnable lines of butlers and governesses and maids and chauffeurs, etc.

The door-man brought the little girl, and Mercy asked her to come inside. The girl, who said her name was Susie, did not need a second invitation. She was poorly-clad and shivered with the cold. Her nose was red. Her fingers were blue. Her shoes were black.

Stopping by one of the big fireplaces in the hall only long enough for Susie to get warm, Mercy led her to the auditorium. Susie's delight

knew no bounds. Unawed by the many attendants, she went rapidly from one thing to another with the greatest enthusiasm. Mercy followed and experienced a new pleasure in watching her new-found friend.

Finally Mercy led her to a seat beside herself on the dais.

"My, it seems like a regular throne!" exclaimed Susie.

"That's the idea," replied Mercy. "It was copied after the throne of Charles I."

Then Susie began to cry. Mercy put her arm about her and drew her close. "Why are you crying?" asked Mercy. "Are n't you glad you came?"

"Oh, yes," sobbed Susie; "but we—we are so poor."

"Don't cry," urged Mercy. "Perhaps I can help you. How poor are you?"

"Oh," replied Susie between sobs, "we are very poor, very poor indeed. You are very rich and have everything that heart could wish for. I have heard that your father is a regular billionaire, while my papa has only two or three millions at the very most."

"Poor little girl!" cooed Mercy. "How did your papa get into such a terrible plight? Is he intemperate?"

"Oh, no," denied Susie, somewhat forgetting her grief in her rush to defend her father. "No, indeed, he is just the finest, hardest-working man in the world. He always brings his pay envelope home to Mother every Saturday night."

"Of course he is a fine man," agreed Mercy. "It was horrid of me even to hint at the possibility of his being otherwise. But I should not feel badly if I were you. To be only a millionaire is very poor, I know, and of course you are compelled to go without many luxuries, but you can at least be comfortable."

"Alas," said Susie, "if you were only right, if we could really be comfortable, I should not complain. I should be satisfied. But you, who have everything, do not realize how much things cost." There was a tremor in her voice as she spoke. "Everything has gone up. With coal at a hundred and fifty dollars a ton, we dread the approach of winter. Mother went to market yesterday and found that eggs had gone to sixty dollars a dozen. She bought two eggs for our little sick sister, but none of the rest of us has eaten an egg for months. She priced a turkey for Christmas, and found that the cheapest one she could get, small and old and tough, was eighty-seven cents. Everything else in proportion: cranberries ten cents apiece; nuts a dollar a dozen, with no rebate for the wormy ones; raisins sixty cents a pair; soup five dollars a can; skim milk six ounces for five dollars; prunes three for a quarter."

"You poor girl!" exclaimed Mercy. "I did n't realize."

"And as for clothes," continued Susie, "it is terrible what we have

to pay. Mother's furs are worn-out, and the cheapest kind of imitation cost eight thousand dollars a set. Our automobile is an old 1931 model, and, even if it were n't almost useless, we should be ashamed to appear on the street with it. Mother has to do all her own work, as we can't get a girl for less than ten thousand a year."

"I'm awfully sorry for you," said Mercy, "but, if you will let me, I'm going to see that you have a real Christmas." She jumped down from the dais and motioned a half-dozen butlers to follow her. She went from booth to booth and gathered up wonderful gifts—pictures stolen from the Louvre, tapestries from the Holy Land, nose-rings from South Africa, furniture from Grand Rapids, and Turkish rugs from Philadelphia. All these and many other things she gathered together in the middle of the auditorium and ordered them to be sent to Susie's house in as many moving-vans as were necessary.

She compiled a large list of real food, both staple and Christmassy, and ordered the butler to gather it together from her father's well-filled larder, groaning wine-cellar, and private cold-storage plant. Then she ordered a winter's supply of coal sent to Susie's house at once. And finally she went to the garage and picked out a limousine, a beautiful last year's model which had never been used, because she did n't like the dress which had been selected to go with it. She ordered the limousine sent around to the Louis XIV *porte cochère*. Then, when the provisions had been put into the car, and everything was in readiness, and Susie had been reclothed and fitted out with furs, Mercy personally escorted her to the door.

"I'm so glad you came," whispered Mercy, as they walked along arm in arm.

"I'm so glad you let me," responded Susie. "You are so good, and God will reward you. I am going to have a real Christmas, after all. To-night I will remember you in my prayers, that is"—she laughed roguishly—"if I remember my prayers."

As Mercy helped her into the car, she whispered casually, "You can keep the limousine, you know. It is to be your very own."

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed Susie. "You are too kind. How can I ever repay you?"

"Tut, tut! Don't think of it," protested Mercy.

Susie got in, the door was closed, the machinery commenced to throb, and Mercy stood on the step to wave her little friend farewell.

Suddenly, as the machine started to move off, Susie stuck her head out of the window.

"I suppose you want me to send the chauffeur back?" she called inquiringly.

"Oh, no," answered Mercy. "Keep him. We have plenty."



# SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES

SECOND SERIES—RUSSIAN

## III. A LONG EXILE

*By Lyoff Tolstoi*

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY JOHN COUNOS, AND WITH  
INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

### LYOFF TOLSTOI, ARTIST AND PREACHER

AS a man of letters, Lyoff Nikolaievitch, Count Tolstoi, holds undisputed place in the first rank; as a philosophical preacher of reform, his position is much less secure. And it is sadly ironical that one who was so ready to lay aside those fictional laurels which all men yielded to him readily has not been accorded the preëminence among moralists which he held to be of so much greater worth.

The last twenty years of his abundant life disclosed in this greatest of all Russians that which was always really present—the single eye, with its gaze constantly set upon ethical ideals. Even a swift survey of his life and its so closely interpenetrating work will bear out this estimate—perhaps surprisingly.

In 1828, on September 9—August 28, old style—Tolstoi was born at Yasnaia Polyana, in the government of Tula, Russia. For several centuries his wealthy and noble family was distinguished in military and state affairs as well as in literature, one of his ancestors, Peter Tolstoi, having been the intimate of Peter the Great. Lyoff's father, Nikolai, and his mother, the Princess Volkhonsky, died while he was yet a lad, leaving him in charge of an aunt. He inherited a rich estate which his father had succeeded in thriftily disencumbering from the debts of extravagance contracted by his own father.

The future author was educated at home, spent some time (1843-'4) at the University of Kazan, did further private work at home, for a while studied law in St. Petersburg, alternated between his estates and the social life of the great cities, and eventually entered the army in 1851. It was during this period that he gathered much of the material for his early stories, notably *The Cossacks*, a short novel of unmistakable power and insight; and the rambling autobiographical stories, *Childhood*,

*Boyhood*, and *Youth*, generally combined under the first title. When the Crimean War broke out, in 1853, Tolstoi was transferred to the army of the Danube, and distinguished himself for bravery before Sevastopol—as well as by his three notable sketches which bear the name of this great siege, “Sevastopol in December,” “Sevastopol in May,” and “Sevastopol in August.”

Tolstoi's life as a soldier was that of a rake—in which he differed not at all from the young noblemen of the period. But this wild career does not seem to have interfered with his fondness for moralizing, nor with his conviction that he was the spiritual Moses, divinely commissioned to lead the Russian people out of the wilderness. His youthful diary confesses that the three passions to which he yielded, gambling, sensuality, and vanity, were moral stumbling-blocks; and with naïve premonition he wrote: “There is something in me which makes me think that I was not born to be just like everybody else.” But the most remarkable youthful forecast is found in the words which Professor Phelps quotes from Tolstoi's journal of this period: “The man who has no other goal than his own happiness is a bad man. He whose goal is the good opinion of others is a weak man. He whose goal is the happiness of others is a virtuous man. He whose goal is God is a great man.” In these cumulative epigrams we have a summary of Tolstoi's creed. However far afield he wandered in middle years, distressed by doubts and confused by jangling voices, the sturdy seeking-soul of him followed this great light with the single eye of an honest man, and this altruistic doctrine he preached with increasing loftiness, through excommunication and charges of insanity, down to the very end. That so extreme a theory should lead him often into blind avenues, and that the phantoms of many inconsistencies should challenge his way, was inevitable; yet Tolstoi stands before the world to-day as a good man and an earnest one, who never lay upon a couch of down while he preached abnegation for others.

An insatiable psychological curiosity possessed the Russian master from youth to the close of his fiction-writing years. In the exercise of this minute observing power, he was as amazing a realist as was Balzac, and when he confines his examinations to humans he is quite as profoundly interesting, but rather tiresome when he records the numberless details of inanimate nature.

A character so given to scrutiny would naturally be introspective, so that his novels are markedly autobiographical. And it is always the struggling, set-upon, brooding character which the novelist chooses through which to depict his own nature. How different from the romantic self-exploitation of Byron! In *Childhood*, “Nikolenka” is Tolstoi himself, as “Olénine” is in *The Cossacks*. So too in “Levine” of *Anna Karenina*, “Pozdnichev,” of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, and “Nekh-

lioudov," of *Resurrection* (his final creed-summary), we have pictures of the self-recognized characteristics and beliefs of the author.

Each of these distinguished novels exhibits the same loosely-knit, diffuse, and digressive literary method, and the same marvellous perfection of character analysis and description. Each, also, advances a step toward that morbid idealism which was always seeking a new expression for a philosophy which was never finally set, but remained a shifting formulary to the last.

*War and Peace* is a huge study of the times of Napoleon and Alexander, brilliant and tedious by turns, and requiring leisure for its reading—in the last analysis, a really great novel. *Anna Karenina* treats with great frankness and high moral purpose contemporaneous Russian society. Both these remarkable books abound in striking comparisons, witty comments, well differentiated character work, and convincing pictures of their times.

Shortly after finishing these works, Tolstoi emerged from his groping, pessimistic, skeptical, Nihilistic philosophy and "discovered" the Sermon on the Mount. Thenceforward he was the Preacher. It is true that, as his devoted wife playfully said, he changed his views every two years, yet his devotion to his altruistic creed—the creed of his youth, as we have seen—was so firm that neither the dying adjurations of his friend Turgenev nor the clamors of the forty-five peoples into whose separate languages his writings have been translated, could induce him to return to fiction—he felt that the mantle of a new spiritual leadership was upon his shoulders, and thenceforward the story-teller's art, when exercised at all, was to be merely a means to the ulterior end of teaching.

A great number of didactic essays wearing the transparent gauze of fiction came from Tolstoi's pen in this period, as well as many religious and ethical treatises, besides one astounding, ideal-smashing discussion, *What is Art?* Radicalism is the native air of reform, and our author was fond of drastic measures in practice and in theory. The communism of his middle period found new emphasis in the later long essay, "What, Then, Must be Done?" Yet his was a directly contrary individualism of personal philosophy. Contradictory again was his abandonment of the city and adoption of the peasant life on his own estates. Indeed, one looks in vain for consistency in the working-out of his whole career; and yet, while the general course swerved startlingly times and again, no one could doubt the naïve sincerity of this sophisticated, simple mind, this nobleman peasant, this iconoclastic gentle man, this nihilistic Christian, this pessimistic idealist, this contradictory soul of single purpose, this incarnation of selfish unselfishness. For there can be no doubt that Tolstoi's character was greater than his confused system of ethics, just as his intellect was greater than his philosophy. Think of the supreme selfless egoism that could permit a wife with whom he lived

as with a sister for years—probably ever since he propounded his extreme marital theories in *The Kreutzer Sonata*—to copy as often as ten times the myriad pages of his works, all laboriously by hand! And yet, because his followers demanded that he should exemplify his doctrines, and partly also because this eighty-two-year-old father of ten children could not live peacefully under stress of the divided beliefs of the home, he broke the heart of this devoted woman by leaving home secretly by night, and died thus in retreat shortly after, November 20 (O. S. Nov. 7), 1910. For four days the Countess Sophia was beneath the roof where her husband lay ill, yet only at the last did she venture to come into his room, drop on her knees by his bedside, and kiss the hand that for conscience' sake had smitten her! Strange contradiction of human life when this idealizer of family love, this apostle of gentleness, this generous soul who could withhold nothing from the needy, make over his estate to his family years before he died, refuse to receive royalties from his books, beg the public to forget his masterpieces of fiction and read only his tractates, labor in the fields, and eat peasant bread—when this great soul could love-starve the aged helpmeet who had been his strength for three-score years!

In the midst of so many vague and divergent expressions throughout his whole literary career, and especially in *My Religion* and *Resurrection*, it is difficult to crystallize what Tolstoi taught. But this seems to me to be the gist:

We have two natures: the animal nature, which decays and dies, and the spiritual, which lives forever. Life consists in doing those things which gratify our desires, and thus bring happiness. But when we attempt to live and gain happiness by the gratification of our animal natures we meet only disappointment, for animal desires can never be really satisfied. Therefore we need to be regenerated, which is nothing more than the enthronement of our spiritual natures and the denying or casting-out of our animal natures. The gratification of our spiritual selves is found in Love, the only good, and the essence of love consists not in self-pleasing but in seeking our happiness in the happiness and well-being of others. Thus do we obey the law of God and become one with Him. In the exercise of our desires for the well-being of others we will not only deny ourselves all carnal desires, but never oppose force by force—love will be sufficient to overcome all enemies. We must not even flee from suffering, danger, or death, but accept each as good, whereupon it will cease to have power to harm us. This life of love is opposed to all selfish acquisition of property. To be truly happy, we must get back to the soil, abandon the artificialities of city life, labor for our food, and give to others.

Though Tolstoi turned so often, and finally without blacksliding, to the peasant class, he did not so much champion their cause as he gemmed a crown for the obscure life as such. He could not pity those whose ways were laborious, because to him no other career than bodily toil could bring the highest good. The outbursting, fiercely passionate soul of all his later years was for the pitiable masses who still chose swords rather than plowshares, who preferred a lawsuit to a loss, who loved the city more than the country, who saw joy in the factory and none in the farm.

Those who have only a shivering admiration for the terrors of Russian fiction in general will find in Tolstoi's short-stories much that is sweet and gentle; yet, being the most Russian of all Russian fiction-writers, he could but cry aloud with the pity of his people. But greater than his pity was his passion for preaching.

Sermons big and little lurk in every corner of his stories to fix you with their relentless eyes. Even when the tale is not clearly didactic, a swift vision of moral relations is sure to come to him who reads. For an instance, take "My Dream," the story of a Russian prince whose daughter runs away with a married man and bears him a child. At length the sister-in-law of the prince pleads with him to forgive his daughter. Here is his severe reply:

"I have suffered enough. I have now but one desire, and that is to put her in such a position that she will be independent of others, and that she shall have no further need of communicating with me. Then she can live her own life, and my family and I need know nothing more about her. That is all I can do."

But the woman-heart crystallizes the teaching of the story when she replies:

"Michael, you say nothing but 'I.' She too is 'I.'"

There is a fine, high spirit, too, in "Where Love is, There God is Also."

Martin Andyeich was an honest Russian cobbler whose wife and children had died, leaving him with but one child, a small boy, upon whom he had set his heart. But that child also died, and Martin reproached God. At length a pilgrim monk directed him to the gospels, and the cobbler became a devout follower of their teachings.

One day he heard a Voice which bade him look to-morrow into the street, for Christ would come to him. The Lord did not appear, however, and for a long while the only one with whom Martin conversed was a chilled old snow-sweeper, to whom the cobbler gave hot tea to drink, as he explained to him the gospel; after which the grateful old man left. Martin continued to look for Christ, but He did not come—though he did see a poorly clad woman with a little child. These he fed and warmed, hearing her story and bestowing an old jacket to cover her thin summer garments. He next acted as mediator between an old woman



and a mischievous boy who had stolen her apples; and to her also he expounded the new truth which had possessed him—the doctrine of love. Thus all day long he had looked for the Christ and had not seen him. But now as he returned to his cellar a Presence declared itself as He who had said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "And Martin then understood that his dream had not deceived him, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had really received Him."

One of the stories in Tolstoi's earlier style is "A Prisoner in the Caucasus."

Zhilin was an officer in the Caucasus in war-time. His aged mother persuaded him to come home once more to see her, and to marry the girl she had chosen to be his bride. The roads were impassable. The Tartars killed or carried into the mountains all Russians they captured. For this reason a military escort passed twice a week from fortress to fortress. Travelling thus, Zhilin became impatient at delays and decided to ride on alone. Kostuilin, another mounted officer, decided to go with him. They had not gone far when they were taken by the Tartars, bound, and held in a Tartar village for ransom. After many weeks, they escaped, only to be retaken and brought back to the village. And now the hut in which they were thrown and their food were worse than before. Again, after many weeks, Zhilin, with the aid of a Tartar maid, escaped and finally reached the fortress. "You see," he told his comrades, "I was going home to be married. But, no; that is evidently not to be my fate." Eventually he and his comrades ransomed Kostuilin for five thousand rubles.

I relate this perfectly plotless tale to show how on a slender thread of actual incident Tolstoi could hang a tremendous weight, for this story, with its naked truth-telling as to conditions, forced the government to act, by the sheer force of public opinion, and this is a miracle in Russia.

Another plotless story whose ten-thousand words pile up a tremendous impression of character is "An Old Acquaintance." The narrative, told in the first person by Prince Nelshiludof, is of how, during an expedition in the Caucasus, he met an acquaintance from Moscow. The splendor of the night in the open and the recreations of the officers are given in gems of description.

During a game of skittles, Guskof, a cashiered officer who now lives with the adjutant, comes to the prince, who seems faintly to recollect having met him before. After some general conversation, the officers retire for either sleep or gambling, leaving the Prince and Guskof alone. Upon being asked if they had not met before, Guskof reminds the Prince of their having met at the home of Guskof's sister in Moscow, and this leads to further reminiscences.



During a long walk that night, Guskof, who constantly by his own story exhibits his weakness of character, tells how he once was of the highest society of Petersburg, but had been—through a liaison and a resulting duel—put under arrest and later cashiered. But this weakness is further shown when he goes on to lament his treatment at the hands of other officers with whom he comes in contact. He expresses a feeling of great disgust at their mode of spending their leisure hours. He admits that he is a moral coward—which is proven later. At length, after further conversation, which inspires a mixed feeling of disgust and pity in the Prince, Guskof borrows from him some money. Suddenly, the bursting of a shell causes Guskof to cringe in abject terror, and in the confusion he disappears, but later is seen by the Prince in a tent offering in a maudlin voice the money which he had borrowed, and boasting of how "his friend the Prince" was rich, and how he had just gotten ten rubles from him.

Perhaps the pity of life, and the tragic results of its sins, is nowhere more piercingly set forth than in Tolstoi's short-story, "Korney Vasiliev"—structurally, his most perfect little fiction, for generally situation rather than plot makes the stronger appeal to our author.

Korney, a well-to-do merchant, after a temporary absence, is returning to his home. While en route, Kuzma, his driver, tells him that Martha, Korney's wife, has taken a new workman in the house—Yevstiquey, her former lover, and that she is again living with him. The affair, says Kuzma, is the talk of the village.

Korney does not know whether to believe the unreliable Kuzma, but on arriving home sets out to find out for himself. He distributes the presents he had brought back with him—one for his little daughter Agatha, one for his son Theodore, one for his wife, and so on. At bedtime, no longer able to restrain himself, he blurts out his suspicions to his wife, who first ridicules them, but finally under her husband's blows admits their truth, and spitefully suggests that little Agatha is not a child of Korney's, but of Yevstiquey's. The child, coming into the room, is brutally used by him—her arm being broken. At the end of this violent scene, Korney leaves his home.

After seventeen years, now a broken old man, Korney is returning home, begging his way. After he left his wife he had taken to drink, spent all his money, and, being unreliable, no one would keep him long at work. The idea takes hold of him that it is his wife who has been the cause of all his misery, and his one thought is, before she dies, to go to her and show her what she has made of him. He is very weak, but manages to make his way to a village, where a kindly young peasant woman, seeing his plight, takes him in for the night and gives him food, drink, and shelter. Noticing that she has a lame arm, he mentions it, and the fact is revealed that she is Agatha, in whose eyes he

recognizes Yevstiquey. He breaks down, but does not reveal himself, though in his heart he is sorry for what he did to the girl.

In the morning he trudges on toward his wife's village. He knocks on the door, and a woman comes out. He recognizes his wife, but how old and haggard she has grown—she who was so beautiful and so strong! And all the resentment vanishes from his heart, and in its place springs up a terrible pity. Everything else about the place seems also to have undergone change. Even after he says appealingly, "Martha, let us die together!" she still pretends not to recognize him, takes him for a tramp, and tells him to go from the door. However, his son Theodore—an image of his father when he was young—takes pity on the old man, not knowing who he is, and, angry at his mother for her unkindness, brings to the old man some black bread. The father is touched, and, even weaker than he was, drags himself back to Agatha's village and begs for shelter, which is given him.

In the meantime, Martha's conscience gives her no peace, and, learning what direction old Korney has taken, she follows. Arrived at her daughter's house, she finds a crowd there mourning the old man, who has died, and from his dignified old face, she does not know whether he had forgiven her or not.

The story that follows in translation is one of the most representative of all the Russian's shorter work. It speaks its own praises.

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## A LONG EXILE

(EARLY TITLE, "GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT BIDES HIS TIME.")

**I**N the town of Vladimir there lived a young merchant, Aksenof by name. He owned two shops and a home.

Aksenof was a fair, curly-headed, handsome fellow, always jolly and singing. In his youth, Aksenof drank much, and when he was intoxicated his ways were rough. Since his marriage, however, he had stopped drinking; except upon rare occasions.

One day, in summer, Aksenof prepared to go to Nijni Novgorod, to the fair. When he was bidding good-by to his wife she said to him:

"Ivan Dmitrievich,\* don't go this time. I dreamt a bad dream about you."

Aksenof laughed and replied:

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\* It will be observed that Aksenof is also called Dmitrievich (*Son of Dmitri*) and Dmitrich, and that the name of another character is variously spelled Semenof, Semenovich, and Semenich. The translator has preserved these forms as they are in the original. Such changing of name-forms is by no means uncommon in Russian stories.

"You are always afraid that I might get a bit jolly at the fair!"

His wife said:

"I myself hardly know why I'm afraid, but I dreamt evil. I dreamt that you came home from town, and took off your hat; and I saw that your head was gray."

Aksenof laughed.

"Well, that means good luck. You'll see. I'll make some nice bargains, and bring fine presents home."

He bid his family farewell, and departed.

In the middle of his journey he met a merchant he knew, and they took lodgings together for the night. First they drank tea, and then they went to sleep in separate rooms which were near each other. Aksenof was not a heavy sleeper. Awaking in the middle of the night, and wishing to take advantage of its cool for travelling, he roused the driver and ordered him to harness the carriage. Having paid his host, he took his departure.

After he had covered some forty versts, he stopped again for food; and, having rested and had his dinner in the shelter of the hotel, he ordered tea, got hold of a guitar, and began to play. Suddenly there arrived a troika, jingling its bells, and from the carriage descended an official, accompanied by two soldiers. He approached Aksenof and asked, "Who are you? Where are you from?" Aksenof answered properly, and invited the official to tea. The latter, however, persisted in his inquiries: "Where did you sleep the past night?" . . . "Alone or with the merchant?" . . . "Did you see the merchant in the morning?" . . . "Why did you depart so early from the hotel?" Aksenof told all as it happened, and added, "Why do you ask all these questions? I'm not a thief or a highwayman. I'm travelling on my business, and I do not see why I should be asked questions."

It was then that the official called to the soldiers and said:

"I am a police official, and I am asking these questions because the merchant with whom you lodged the past night has been found murdered. Show us your things. . . . Search him!"

They entered the room, seized his travelling bag and sack, and started to unbind and search. Suddenly the official brought forth a knife from the sack, and roared out:

"Whose knife is this?"

Aksenof looked, and saw that a knife smeared with blood had been taken out of his sack, and he was frightened.

"And why is there blood on this knife?"

Aksenof wished to reply, but he could n't utter a word.

"I—I don't know. I—the knife is—I—not mine——"

Then the official said:

"This morning the merchant was found stabbed in his bed. It

was n't possible for any one else to do it. The house was locked from the inside, and there was no one else in the house but you. Besides, the knife covered with blood has been found in your sack; and your face too shows it. Tell me, how did you kill him, and how much money did you get?"

Aksenof swore that he was not the guilty man, that he did not see the merchant after he had had tea with him, that the eight thousand rubles in his possession were his own money, and that the knife was not his. But his voice quavered, his face was pale, and he trembled from head to foot, like one guilty.

The official called the soldiers, ordered him bound and taken into the carriage. When, with his feet fast, he was thrust into the carriage, Aksenof crossed himself and began to cry. Aksenof's things and money were taken from him, and he was sent to prison in a nearby city. Inquiries were made in Vladimir to find out what sort of man he was, and it was generally agreed among the merchants and inhabitants of the city that while from the time of his youth Aksenof drank and had had a good time, he was a good-hearted man. Then began his trial. The charge against him was that he had killed the merchant and had stolen his twenty thousand rubles.

Aksenof's wife suffered intensely, and did not know what to think. Her children were still young, one a suckling. She took them all with her and arrived in the city where her husband was imprisoned. At first she was refused admission, but after many petitions she was led to her husband. When she saw him in prison apparel, in chains, among a lot of cut-throats, she fell to the ground, and it was a long time before she came to herself. Then she placed her children around her, sat down at his side, and began to tell him all about the domestic affairs and to ask him about all that had happened to him. After he had told her all, she said:

"Well, what's to be done now?"

He replied:

"It is necessary to send a petition to the Czar. It is wrong to let an innocent person suffer."

To this, his wife said that a petition to the Czar had already been sent, but that it had not reached him. Thereupon Aksenof grew silent, and seemed much downcast. Then she reminded him:

"There was something, after all, in that dream—do you remember?—in which I saw you gray-headed. There, from sorrow you've really grown gray. You should n't have gone on the journey."

And as she ran her fingers through his hair, she said:

"Vania, my dear one, tell your wife the truth: did n't you really do it?"

Aksenof replied, "And you too believe it!" He covered his face

with his hands and wept. Later a soldier entered, and said that it was time for the visitors to depart. And Aksenof for the last time bid farewell to his family.

After his wife had gone, Aksenof began to recall his conversation with her. When he remembered that his wife too suspected him and asked him whether he had killed the merchant, he said to himself, "Now I see that, except God, no one can know the truth, and that it is only to Him we must appeal, and then await His mercy." From that time on, Aksenof ceased to send petitions, ceased to hope, and only prayed to God.

Aksenof was sentenced to the knout and hard labor.

The sentence was carried out. He was lashed with the knout, and when the wounds healed he was driven with other convicts to Siberia.

In Siberia, the convict lived twenty-six years, doing hard labor. The hair on his head grew white like snow, while his beard grew long, sparse, and gray. All his joy was gone. He was bent, walked slowly, said little, never laughed, and prayed to God often.

In prison Aksenof learned to make boots, and with the money earned thereby he purchased the Books of the Martyrs and read them when there was sufficient light in his cell; but on holidays he attended the prison chapel, read the Apostles, and sang in the choir—his voice still remained good. The authorities liked Aksenof for his quiet behavior, while his prison comrades held him in esteem and called him "grandfather" and "holy man." When the prisoners had any petitions to make to the authorities they always sent Aksenof as their spokesman; and when they had any quarrels among themselves, they always came before Aksenof for judgment.

From home Aksenof received no letters, and he did not know whether or not his wife and children were alive.

Once a new batch of convicts arrived at the prison. In the evening all the old convicts gathered around the new arrivals and put all sorts of questions to them, as to what town or village they had come from, and for what crime they had been sentenced. Aksenof also sat down on a bench near the new convicts, and, hanging his head, listened to what was being said. Among the new convicts was a tall, robust old man of sixty, with gray, trimmed beard. He was telling why he was sent away. He said:

"Well, brothers, it was n't for anything that I've got here. I unharnessed a horse from a sled. Got caught; stole the horse, they said. 'I only wished to get there quicker,' said I, 'and I let the horse loose. And the driver was a friend of mine, besides. There's nothing wrong in that,' said I. 'No,' they said; 'you stole the horse.' But they could n't really say what and where I stole. Well, I've done things in my time for which I should have got here long ago if they had

only caught me at it; but this once I've been driven here not according to law. To be honest, I've been in Siberia, but did n't remain long."

"Where do you come from?" asked one of the convicts.

"I'm from the town Vladimir—native of the place. I'm called Makar—and my paternal name Semenovich."

Aksenof raised his head and asked:

"And have you heard, Semenich, in Vladimir town of the Aksenofs, merchants? Are they alive?"

"To be sure, I've heard! They are rich merchants, though their father is in Siberia—a sinner like the rest of us. And you, old man, why are you here?"

Aksenof did not like to talk about his sorrow; so he sighed and said:

"For my sins I've been here twenty-six years at hard labor."

Makar Semenov, however, persisted:

"But what sort of sins?"

Aksenof replied, "I must have deserved what I got." Further than that he would not say, but the other prisoners told the new-comer why Aksenof was sent to Siberia. They related how some one had murdered a merchant while on a journey and had foisted the knife upon Aksenof, who had been sentenced, though innocent.

When Makar Semenov heard this he looked at Aksenof, clapped his hands upon his knees, and exclaimed:

"Well, that's strange! Certainly is strange! You've grown old, grandfather!"

The rest began to ask him why he was astonished, and where he had seen Aksenof, but Makar Semenov made no reply. He only said:

"A miracle, brothers! That we should meet here!"

And these words suggested to Aksenof the thought that this man knew perhaps who had killed the merchant. He asked:

"Tell, me, Semenich, have you heard about my case before? And have you ever seen me before?"

"Why should n't I have heard! News flies quickly. But it was such a long time ago that what I had heard I had forgotten," said Makar Semenov.

"Perhaps you've heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksenof.

Makar Semenov broke into a laugh and said:

"To be sure, he killed him in whose sack was found the knife. And if some one else did slip the knife in the sack! Not caught, not a thief! Besides, how could any one have slipped the knife into the sack, since it was at your very head? You surely would have heard."

When Aksenof heard these words, the thought came to him that this very man had killed the merchant. He arose and went away. Aksenof could not sleep the entire night. A melancholy came upon him, and images began to rise up before him. First he imagined he saw his wife,



the same as she looked when she saw him off to the fair for the last time. He saw her as in life; he saw her face and eyes, and heard how she spoke and laughed. Then he saw his children as they were then, little ones, one in a fur coat, another at the breast. And he recalled himself as he had been once—joyous, young; he recalled too how he looked as he sat in the hotel when they arrested him; how he played on the guitar, and how happy he had felt at that moment. And he recalled the place of execution, where he was knouted, and the man with the knout, and the throng all around, and the chains, and the convicts, and all the twenty-six years of his prison life; and his old age too he recalled. And such a melancholy came upon Aksenof, that death itself would have been welcome.

"And all on account of that scoundrel!" thought Aksenof.

Then came into his heart such a vindictiveness against Makar Semenov that he felt willing to die himself if only to revenge himself upon him. He read prayers the entire night, but could not calm himself. Next day he did not go near Makar Semenov and did not look at him.

So passed two weeks. Aksenof could not sleep nights, and such a melancholy would come upon him that he did not know what to do with himself.

Once at night, walking through the prison, he observed a stirring of soil under one of the sleeping-bunks. He stopped to look. Suddenly Makar Semenov leaped from under the bunk, and his frightened eyes looked at Aksenof. Aksenof wished to go on, so as not to notice him; but Makar caught him by the hand, and told him how he had dug a passage under the walls, and how every day he disposed of dirt by carrying it out with him in his boots and emptying it in the street, when sent out to work. He continued:

"Only be silent, old man, and I'll show you the way out. But if you tell, I'll get a knouting, which will be the worse for you—I'll kill you."

When Aksenof looked at his enemy, he trembled from wrath, released his hand from Makar's, and said:

"I have no reason for escaping, and you can't kill me, for you've killed me long ago. As to telling on you, I may do it or not—as God wills it, so I shall do."

The next day, when the convicts were sent out to work, the soldiers noticed that Makar Semenov was emptying dirt out of his boots. They searched the prison and discovered a hole. Presently the superintendent arrived and questioned every one who had dug the hole. All denied it. Those who knew would not give Makar Semenov away, because they knew that for this affair he would be knouted half to death.

Then the superintendent turned to Aksenof. He knew that the exile was a just man, and so he said to him:

"Old man, I know you to be truthful; tell me, before God, who did this?"

Makar Semenov stood there as if nothing were happening, looked at the superintendent, and did not even glance at Aksenof. Aksenof, however, stood with his hands and lips all a-tremble, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, "Suppose I should hide him—but why should I forgive him, when he has ruined me? Why should n't I be revenged for my misery? Then, again, to tell on him would mean a knouting. But what put the thought into my head? Would it make my burden lighter to bear?"

The superintendent repeated his question:

"Now, come, old man, tell the truth: who did the digging?"

Aksenof glanced at Makar Semenov and said:

"I can't tell, your Honor. God forbids me to tell. And I won't tell, do with me whatsoever you will—I'm at your mercy."

The superintendent struggled with him, but Aksenof would say nothing more.

So they never knew who had dug the hole.

The next night, when Aksenof lay down in his bunk and had hardly closed his eyes, he became conscious that some one came near him and sat down at his feet. He looked into the dark and recognized Makar. Aksenof spoke first:

"What more do you want from me? What are you up to now?"

Makar Semenov remained silent. Aksenof raised himself and said:

"What is it you want? Begone! Or else I'll call a soldier."

Makar Semenov bent over close to Aksenof and said in a whisper:

"Ivan Dmitrievich, forgive me!"

Aksenof said, "Forgive you for what?"

"It was I who killed the merchant, and it was I who slipped the knife into your sack. I wished to kill you too, but there was a noise outdoors, and so I slipped the knife in and crawled out through the window."

Aksenof was silent, and he did not know what to say. Makar Semenov let himself down from the bunk, performed a genuflection, and said:

"Ivan Dmitrievich, forgive me, forgive me for God's sake! I will let them know that I killed the merchant, and they will let you go free. Then you can return home."

Aksenof replied:

"It is easy for you to say that, but it is for me to suffer. Where can I go now? . . . My wife is dead; my children have forgotten me; there is nowhere for me to go. . . ."

Makar Semenov did not rise from the ground; he beat his head against the earth and continued saying:

"Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me! When they put the lash on me, it was much easier for me to bear than to look at you now. . . . And to think that you had pity on me—and did not tell. Forgive me, for the sake of Christ! Forgive me, accursed wretch that I am!"

Then he began to weep.

When Aksenof saw that Makar Semenov was weeping, he too wept, and said:

"God will forgive you; perhaps I am a hundredfold worse than you!"

And all at once he felt as if something were lifted from his soul. And he ceased to yearn for home, and did not wish to leave the prison, but only thought of the final hour.

Makar Semenov did not listen to Aksenof, and confessed his guilt. But when Aksenof's release arrived, he was already dead.



## BY DECEMBER 15TH

*By L. R. B.*

TO the Consumers' League belongs the greater credit, and unlimited praise, for its splendid ten-year fight and final victory over night-shopping at the Christmas season. Yet the fact remains that without the coöperation of shoppers themselves not an inch could have been gained; the law would never have been enforced unless it had been backed by the people, and the League pushed and pushed the people until it got them into line. Last year, for the first time, every large city in the United States responded more or less to the pressure of public opinion on this tremendously human question: that no one person has the right to enjoy Christmas at such a cost to another person. So far as the law goes, this has been argued to a finish; but this by no means assures a permanent victory unless every man and woman keeps driving in the wedge. Holiday goods are attractively displayed in November, and this is the right time to buy, adopting the slogan, "Shop early," and sticking to it until every item on the list is crossed off by *December the 15th*, instead of dawdling along selfishly and unintelligently until the last day before Christmas—for certainly lack of sympathy in misfortune to others is lack of understanding. This is one big way to show "Good-will to men."

## GENTLEST AND KINDLIEST

(IN MEMORY OF DR. FURNESS)

*By John Russell Hayes*

THE gentlest and the kindest of men  
Has gone at last from out our mortal ken,  
But not from out our memories that keep  
Vigils of love beside his tranquil sleep,  
And in this season of the fallen leaf  
Pour round his name our elegiac grief.

For his own self we loved this honored one,  
And thereunto we loved him as the son  
Of that old patriot sire who walked these ways  
And fought for truth in old heroic days,  
The patriot sire whose more than ninety years  
Won all men's reverence, won all men's tears.

Large measure of that father's lofty spirit  
Did he the ever-loyal son inherit,—  
The old-time courtesy, the simple creed,  
The cheery kindness of word and deed;  
The charm, the friendliness, the humor quaint  
That made him seem half human and half saint;—  
Thus cherishing and handing on the fame  
Of an illustrious and noble name.

Who would not deem illustrious a long  
And happy service to the Prince of Song,  
A service that in ripeness of his days  
Had gained for Horace Furness all men's praise,  
All men's regard for his so splendid part  
In celebrating Shakespeare's glorious art!  
So deeply had he pondered Shakespeare's page  
And mused and dreamed in that resplendent age,—  
Its very thought and language came to be  
A part of him,—its sane philosophy  
That looked upon the world with genial glance  
And saw in simplest things a high romance,  
Yet deeply felt the tragedy and strife  
That underlie the mystery of life.

Hamlet the dreamer, Lear distraught and blind,  
Imperial Prospero, bright Rosalind  
And all her lovely sisters, Jaques wise  
And Falstaff of prodigious wit and size,—  
Or grave or gay, of high or low degree,  
He loved them all with genial sympathy,  
Knew them familiarly and drew from each  
Some rare conceit, some gentle turn of speech,  
So that with him we truly seemed to be  
Made free of Shakespeare's matchless company.

Now have that kindly soul, that noble heart  
Become of immortality a part,  
Enriching with their wealth some vaster sphere  
And shedding blessings surely there as here.  
That cherished name shall now forever be  
A beautiful and gracious memory  
Of one who brightened the gray walks of earth  
With sunny friendliness and cheerful mirth.

No more his noble books, his well-loved flowers  
Shall minister unto his fruitful hours;  
No more the converse with its wit and grace,  
The hearty hand-clasp and the beaming face;  
No more the thoughtfulness that brought its cheer  
To humblest souls and made them hold him dear;  
For he the gentlest, kindest of men  
Has gone at last from out our mortal ken,  
But not from out our memories that keep  
Vigils of love around his quiet sleep.



# THE PUBLIC-SERVICE COMMISSION AND THE INVESTOR

*By Edward Sherwood Mead, Ph.D.*

THE October issue contained an explanation of the methods employed by the investment banker in investigating the securities of public-service corporations. We saw with what great care these investigations are made, and with what searching scrutiny every factor bearing upon the merits of the enterprise is considered. As a result of these careful examinations, the number of failures among public-utility corporations is each year diminishing, and the investor can buy these securities with confidence.

Supplementing the work of the investment banker, although undertaken with a different motive, many States have established administrative bodies known as Public-Service Commissions, who are charged with the duty of supervising the rates and prices, the service, and, incidentally, the capitalization, accounting methods, and financial policy of public-service corporations. The primary object in the establishment of these commissions has been to protect the public against bad service and exorbitant rates and prices. In order to make sure that corporations subject to their jurisdiction are honestly capitalized, so that they may not have any inducement unduly to advance rates in order to pay interest and dividends on capitalization representing no actual value, and in order that the proceeds of their sales of stock and bonds should be applied to the improvement of their plant and to the consequent betterment of their service, some of the Public-Service Commission laws clothe the commissions with authority over the issue of securities.

The nature of this power over security issues is indicated by the following extract from the "Act Creating the Public-Service Commissions of New York":

Any common carrier, railroad corporation, or street railroad corporation, organized under the laws of the State of New York, may issue bonds, stocks, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness, payable at periods of more than twelve months after the date thereof, when necessary for the acquisition of property, the construction, completion, exten-



sion, or improvement of its facilities, or for the improvement or maintenance of its service or for the discharge or lawful refunding of its obligations, *provided, and not otherwise, that there shall have been secured from the proper commission an order authorizing such issue, and the amount thereof, and stating that, in the opinion of the commission, the use of the capital to be secured by the issue of such stock, bonds, notes, or other evidences of indebtedness, is reasonably required for the said purpose of the corporation.* For the purpose of enabling it to determine whether it should issue such an order, the commission shall make such inquiry or investigation, hold such hearings, and examine such witnesses, books, papers, documents, or contracts, as it may deem of importance in enabling it to reach a determination.

Under this power every corporation proposing to issue or authorize any securities must apply to the Public-Service Commission for authorization, and the new securities will not be sanctioned unless the commission is first satisfied that the issue is for the best interests of the company. The method of procedure in cases involving the authorization of bond-issues is outlined by the commission of the Second District of New York in its second annual report, as follows:

In passing upon the application for leave to issue additional capital stock, the commission will consider:

*Whether there is reasonable prospect of fair return upon the investment proposed, to the end that securities having apparent worth but actually little or no value may not be issued with our sanction.*

We think that to a reasonable extent the interests of the investing public should be considered by us in passing upon these applications.

The commission should satisfy itself that, in a general way, the venture will be likely to prove commercially feasible, but it should not undertake to reach and announce a definite conclusion that the new construction or improvement actually constitutes a safe or attractive basis for investment. Commercial enterprises depend for their success upon so many conditions which cannot be foreseen or reckoned with in advance, that the duty of the commission is discharged as to applications of this character when it has satisfied itself that the contemplated purpose is a fair business proposition.

Although the commission here expressly disaffirms its intention to guarantee the securities whose issues it sanctions, its method of procedure is so careful as actually to reach this result. This method is as follows:

An estimate will be made from a consideration of the results of operation of existing roads of the probable gross earnings.

An estimate will be made in like manner of the probable operating expenses, taxes, and depreciation charges.

The excess of earnings over the disbursements which must be made before fixed charges can be met represents the sum which is applicable to fixed charges.

The maximum bond issue which will be allowed must be determined

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by the sum thus ascertained to be applicable to the payment of the interest charge.

*No bond issue should be permitted creating an interest charge beyond an amount which it is reasonably certain can be met from the net earnings.*

*Stock representing a cash investment should be required to an amount sufficient to afford a moral guarantee that in the judgment of those investing the enterprise is likely to prove commercially successful.*

The order authorizing such stock and bond issues will contain approximate provisions designed to secure the construction of the road in accordance with the plans and specifications upon which the authorization was made, and not in excess of the actual requirements.

If the allowance proves inadequate for the required purposes, an application for further capitalization may be made, upon which application the expenditure of the proceeds of stock and bonds already authorized must be shown in detail.

After an issue of bonds has passed successfully through the ordeal of this investigation, the investor need have little fear concerning their safety.

There is another aspect of the Public-Service Commission matter which is even more reassuring to the investor. When a Public-Service Commission has authorized the issue of securities, it is by implication bound to protect the company whose application it has authorized, not merely against the action of their directors in borrowing money or issuing stock against the best interests of the corporation, but also to protect them against competing enterprises for which there is no public necessity, and which would not, therefore, prove profitable. The best recent example of the protection which the Public-Service Commission gives a company whose capitalization and rates are subject to its jurisdiction is in the refusal of the application of the Buffalo, Rochester, & Eastern Railroad for authority to issue securities for the construction of a line of railroad from Buffalo to Albany, which was to parallel the line of the New York Central. The ground of the refusal was that there was no necessity for the new line, that it would not prove profitable, that it would injure the New York Central, and that no public benefit would result. A summary of the conclusions of the commission upon these various matters is as follows:

First, that the cost of the proposed road would be about \$100,000,000.

Second, that existing railroad facilities between Buffalo and the Hudson River were adequate to take care of existing business and for a very large increase in future traffic.

Third, that the cost of the proposed road would require a capitalization of \$336,700 per mile, much larger than the capitalization of any railroad system in the country.

Fourth, that this capitalization would require earnings per mile of at least \$48,100, if 5 per cent. is to be earned on the amount invested.

Fifth, that to earn this sum would involve a traffic greatly in excess of the traffic of any railroad in the country.

Sixth, that the proposed road would not be able to forward its freight over its eastern connections at the Hudson River, since these are already overtaxed.

Seventh, that the proposed road does not contemplate any benefit to the public in the reduction of rates, and, eighth, that the applicant has not shown sufficient financial ability to justify issuing to it a certificate of public convenience and a necessity to construct a road costing \$100,000,000.

If the Public-Service Commission of New York had been in existence thirty years ago, the unnecessary, costly, and wasteful West Shore Railroad, which was constructed for no other purpose than to divide traffic which the New York Central was handling with economy and despatch, would not have been authorized, and a large amount of the reckless railroad construction west of the Mississippi, which bankrupted, for example, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, the St. Louis and San Francisco, and assisted in breaking down the Northern Pacific, would not have been sanctioned.

The Public-Service Commission not only protects the investor against the inevitable consequences of competition where no necessity for the competing property exists, but it also secures his company in the right to charge such rates and fares as will yield a reasonable return on its securities.

It is always to be presumed that public-service corporations will charge rates or prices sufficiently high, and experience shows that, with few exceptions, they have done so. In many cities, however, agitations have been started by civic bodies looking to a reduction in these rates, and when this agitation is backed up by a vigorous public sentiment, it makes a great deal of trouble for the companies, even though it does not result in any positive action upon rates. When the Public-Service Commission is in control, however, all such petitions and complaints must go before that body. The matter is carefully investigated, and an authoritative opinion is expressed, which, since it is known to be in the interest of the public as well as the corporation, is usually taken as final. The ideal of public-service investment is a regulated monopoly, and this is at least approximated in those States which have established strong Public-Service Commissions.

At the time the New York Public-Service Commissions were instituted, the most serious apprehensions were expressed by financial interests that the new laws which took away from directors and stockholders most of the control which they had previously exercised over the issues of new securities would seriously interfere with the efforts of companies to provide new capital. As the commissions have progressed, however,

they have been forced into the position of virtually guaranteeing every issue which they approve on the basis of a careful investigation of the prospects of the enterprise. A critical examination of its engineering features, the rock on which so many new schemes are wrecked, is made, and an assurance to the investor that reasonable rates will be allowed and that cut-throat competition will be prevented, so they have come to be very favorably regarded by investment bankers.

The bond salesman who can offer a security whose issue has been approved by some Public-Service Commission has his work of persuasion largely accomplished. Indeed, the sentiment among investment bankers is nearly unanimous as to the benefits which have come to their business from the work of these regulative bodies.



## DECEIVERS EVER

BY CAROLYN WELLS

A DOWNY, browny Butterfly  
Fell in love with a Morning-Glory.  
He fluttered near, she leaned to hear,  
As he whispered the old, old story.

"I love you, *love you*, little flower;  
You've won my heart completely.  
Oh, Blossom Blue, do you love me, too?"  
The blossom looked up sweetly,

And, smiling through a tear of dew,  
She murmured, "Yes, my own."  
The words fell fair on the summer air,—  
The Butterfly had flown!

